The Shurangama Sutra

The Shurangama Sutra

Volume One

a simple explanation by the

Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

English translation by the
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The Shurangama Sutra - Volume One

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Introduction

This is the first of eight volumes of the *Shurangama Sutra*, with commentaries from the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua.

In "The Ten Doors of Discrimination", the Venerable Master uses the traditional Syan Shou School's method of expounding the Sutra's deep contents. Here the Master discusses the complete title of the Sutra, its causes and conditions, division, depth and meaning, teaching substance, individuals able to receive the teaching, similaries and differences and the determination of time.

In "The History of the Transmission and Translation", the Master introduces Shramana Paramiti, Shramana Meghashikara, Shramana Hwai Di and disciple Fang Yung, who were the translator, the reviewer, the certifier and the editor respectively.

In "The Testimony of Faith", Shakyamuni Buddha's great disciples are mentioned as testification to the awesome faith in the Buddha. Shariputra, Mahamaudgalyayana, Mahakaushthila, Purna-maitreyaniputra, Subhuti, Upanishad, and other great Bodhisattvas and Arhats were among those who were present.

Then, the causes and conditions for the Sutra is revealed in "Ananda's Fall", where the Venerable Ananda, the Buddha's youngest cousin, was tempted by Matangi's daughter, the prostitute. Fortunately, the Buddha, knowing this in advance, instructed the greatly-wise Manjushri Bodhisattva to rescue

Ananda from the indecent artifact which nearly caused Ananda to break his precept substance.

Realizing his great error and his lack of samadhi, Ananda then reverently requested instruction. In “The Way to Shamatha”, Shakyamuni Buddha attempts to reveal the true reason for Ananda’s fall; it was because Ananda did not realize the falseness of his own mind. Even with all his years of learning, Ananda still had not yet recognized his true mind and so had not attained sagehood.

Finally, in “Ananda Repents and Seeks the Truth”, Ananda realizes that the Buddha cannot bestow salvation upon him. He has to actually walk the path and cultivate the Way. Again, Ananda requests the Buddha’s compassionate instruction.

The Buddha then prepares to erect the great Dharma banner for all living beings so that they can obtain the wondrous subtle secret, the pure nature, the bright mind, and attain the pure eye.

The wondrous journey into the *Shurangama Sutra*’s deep, profound teachings begins.

User's Guide

to the Shurangama Sutra series

Because of the length of the *Shurangama Sutra*, and the need to provide aid to various readers, the Sutra has been compiled into a series of 9 books: the "Sutra Text and Suppliments", and the remaining Volumes one to eight.

The "Sutra Text and Suppliments" contains:

1. the entire Sutra text, which is in excess of 2700 paragraphs;
2. the entire outline, which contains 1676 entries;
3. and a master index, which has index references for both the "Sutra Text and Suppliments" and the eight volumes.

Volumes one to eight contain:

1. the Sutra text, with commentaries;
2. the local outline entries;
3. and a local index.

Readers who wish to read or recite the Sutra in its entirety will find the "Sutra Text and Suppliments" very useful.

Those who wish to deeply study the Sutra with its commentaries will find volumes one to eight indispensable.

Exhortation to Protect and Propagate

by Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua

Within Buddhism, there are very many important sutras. However, the most important Sutra is the *Shurangama Sutra*. If there are places which have the *Shurangama Sutra*, then the Proper Dharma dwells in the world. If there is no *Shurangama Sutra*, then the Dharma Ending Age appears. Therefore, we Buddhist disciples, each and every one, must bring our strength, must bring our blood, and must bring our sweat to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*. In the *Sutra of the Ultimate Extinction of the Dharma*, it says very, very clearly that in the Dharma Ending Age, the *Shurangama Sutra* is the first to disappear, and the rest of the sutras disappear after it. If the *Shurangama Sutra* does not disappear, then the Proper Dharma Age is present. Because of that, we Buddhist disciples must use our lives to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*, must use vows and resolution to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*, and cause the *Shurangama Sutra* to be known far and wide, reaching every nook and cranny, reaching into each and every dust-mote, reaching out to the exhaustion of empty space and of the Dharma Realm. If we can do that, then there will be a time of Proper Dharma radiating great light.

Why would the *Shurangama Sutra* be destroyed? It is because it is too true. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's true body. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's sharira. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's true and actual stupa and shrine. Therefore, because

the *Shurangama Sutra* is so true, all the demon kings use all kinds of methods to destroy the *Shurangama Sutra*. They begin by starting rumors, saying that the *Shurangama Sutra* is phony. Why do they say the *Shurangama Sutra* is phony? It is because the *Shurangama Sutra* speaks too truly, especially in the sections on The Four Decisive Deeds, the Twenty-five Sages Describing Perfect Penetration, and the States of the Fifty Skandha Demons. Those of off-center persuasions and externally-oriented ways, weird demons and strange freaks, are unable to stand it. Consequently there are a good many senseless people who claim that the *Shurangama Sutra* is a forgery.

Now, the principles set forth in the *Shurangama Sutra* are on the one hand proper, and on the other in accord with principle, and the weird demons and strange freaks, those in various cults and sects, all cannot hide away their forms. Most senseless people, in particular unwise scholars and garbage-collecting professors "Tread upon the holy writ." With their extremely scant and partial understanding, they are confused and unclear, lacking real erudition and true and actual wisdom. That is why they falsely criticize. We who study the Buddhadharma should very deeply be aware of these circumstances. Therefore, wherever we go, we should bring up the *Shurangama Sutra*. Wherever we go, we should propagate the *Shurangama Sutra*. Wherever we go, we should introduce the *Shurangama Sutra* to people. Why is that? It is because we wish to cause the Proper Dharma long to dwell in the world.

If the *Shurangama Sutra* is regarded as true, then there is no problem. To verify its truth, let me say that if the *Shurangama Sutra* were phony, then I would willingly fall into the hells forever through all eternity—for being unable to recognize the Buddhadharma—for mistaking the false for true. If the *Shurangama Sutra* is true, then life after life in every time I make the vow to propagate the Great Dharma of the Shurangama, that I shall in every time and every place propagate the true principles of the Shurangama.

Everyone should pay attention to the following point. How could the *Shurangama Sutra* not have been spoken by the Buddha? No one else could have spoken the *Shurangama Sutra*. And so I hope that all those people who make senseless accusations will wake up fast and stop creating the causes for suffering in the Hell of Pulling Out Tongues. No matter who the scholar is, no matter what country students of the Buddhadharma are from, all should quickly mend their ways, admit their mistakes, and manage to change. There is no greater good than that. I can then say that all who look at the *Shurangama Sutra*, all who listen to the *Shurangama Sutra*, and all who investigate the *Shurangama Sutra*, will very quickly accomplish Buddhahood.

Composed by Gold Mountain Shramana Tripitaka Master Hua
Translated by Bhikshuni Heng Hsien
Reviewed by Shramanerika Heng Wen

The Eight Guidelines

of the Buddhist Text Translation Society

1. A volunteer must free him/herself from the motives of personal fame and profit.
2. A volunteer must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.
3. A volunteer must refrain from aggrandizing his/her work and denigrating that of others.
4. A volunteer must not establish him/herself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with his or her fault-finding.
5. A volunteer must take the Buddha-mind as his/her own mind.
6. A volunteer must use the wisdom of Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles.
7. A volunteer must request Virtuous Elders in the ten directions to certify his/her translations.
8. A volunteer must endeavour to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

Outline

of the Shurangama Sutra

The outline for the Shurangama Sutra was compiled by Dharma Master Yuan Ying, which categorizes the various parts of the Sutra text consisting of over 2,700 paragraphs to 1,676 entries.

These entries are presented in the form of a tree-like structure, dividing the various parts of the Sutra text into groups, those groupings being sub-divided further and further, thus providing a detailed break-down of the entire text.

Though the outline is not a prerequisite to reading the Sutra text and the accompanying commentaries, it serves as a useful tool for students of the Way who wish to deeply study the Sutra. Without this outline, students may find it difficult to refer to specific parts of the text.

Because of the size of the outline (and the Sutra), only outline entries which pertain to the Sutra text contained within this book is included.

For the outline of the entire Sutra, please refer to the “Sutra Text and Suppliments”, where the entire sutra text, outline, and index entries are all combined into one single volume.

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釋迦牟尼文佛

Namo Original Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha

Verse for Opening a Sutra

The unsurpassed, profound, and wonderful Dharma,
Is difficult to encounter in hundreds of millions of eons,
I now see and hear it, receive and uphold it,
And I vow to fathom the Tathagata's true meaning.

CHAPTER 1

The Ten Doors of Discrimination

Sutra:

The Sutra of the Foremost Shurangama at the Great Buddha's Summit Concerning the Tathagata's Secret Cause of Cultivation, His Certification to the Complete Meaning and all Bodhisattvas' Myriad Practices.

Commentary:

These words are the complete title of the Sutra. All but the word "Sutra" are the specific designation which differentiates this Sutra from others. The word "Sutra" is the general designation for all the discourses of the Buddha.

The Sutra titles in the Tripitaka (the "Three Treasuries" of the Buddhist Canon) are divided into seven classes, which are more broadly divided into three kinds of single titles, three kinds of double titles, and complete titles.

The three kinds of single titles are:

1. Sutra titles that refer only to people. *The Buddha Speaks the Amitabha Sutra* is an example of this kind. The *Buddha* and *Amitabha* are both people; only people are named in this title.

2. Sutra titles that refer only to dharmas. *The Maha-Parinirvana Sutra* is an example. *Nirvana* is the dharma of non-production and non-extinction.

3. Sutra titles that contain only analogies. The title *Brahma Net Sutra* refers to the analogy, discussed in that Sutra, of the circular curtain of netting of the Great Brahma King.

The three kinds of double titles are:

4. Sutra titles that refer both to people and to dharmas. The title *The Sutra of Manjushri's Questions on Prajna* indicates that Manjushri, a person, requests Prajna, a dharma.

5. Sutra titles that refer both to people and to analogies. In the title *Sutra of the Tathagata's Lion's Roar*, the *Tathagata* is a person, and the *Lion's Roar* is an analogy for the Buddha's speaking of Dharma.

6. Sutra titles that refer both to dharmas and to analogies. An example is the *Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra*. *Wonderful Dharma* is the dharma, and *Lotus Flower* is the analogy.

The complete titles are:

7. Sutra titles that refer to people, to dharmas, and to analogies. *The Buddha's Universal Great Means Expansive Flower Adornment Sutra* is an example. *Great* and *Universal* refer to dharmas, the *Buddha* is a person, and *Flower Adornment* is an analogy, in which the myriad practices that lead to enlightenment are said to be flowers that adorn the unsurpassed and virtuous attainment of enlightenment.

Every Sutra title belongs to one of these seven classes, and everyone who lectures Sutras should be able to explain them. If you do not understand these seven, how can you explain Sutras for others? How can you teach others to become enlightened when you yourself have not awakened? You should not be like people who decide to call themselves Dharma Masters after reading a book or two, despite the fact that they can't explain even one of the seven types of Sutra titles or the Fivefold Mysterious Meanings or a single

door of the Ten Doors of Discrimination. That is truly a case of premature exuberance. By speaking Sutras and lecturing Dharma without having reached a true understanding of them, these people send most of their listeners to the hells, and they themselves fall, too. Once in the hells, neither they nor their followers know how they got there. How pitiful! Only after reaching a genuine understanding and gaining genuine wisdom in the study of the Buddhadharma can one teach and transform living beings without making mistakes.

To explain the inexhaustible principles contained in the *Shurangama Sutra*, I will use the Ten Doors of Discrimination of the Syan Shou ("Worthy Leader") School rather than the Fivefold Mysterious Meanings of the Tyan Tai ("Heavenly Vista") School. The Syan Shou and the Tyan Tai are two great schools of Buddhism in China. Some Dharma Masters who lecture Sutras have studied only one of the two schools, and so their explanations do not always reach the level of "perfect penetration without obstruction."

The Ten Doors of Discrimination of the Syan Shou School are:

1. The General Explanation of the Title;
2. The Causes and Conditions for the Arising of the Teaching;
3. The Division in Which the Sutra is Included and the Vehicle to Which It Belongs;
4. The Examination of the Depth of the Meaning and the Principle;
5. The Expression of the Teaching-substance;
6. The Identification of the Appropriate Individuals Able to Receive the Teaching;
7. The Similarities and Differences Between the Principle and Its Implications;
8. The Determination of the Time;
9. The History of the Transmission and Translation;
10. The Specific Explanation of the Meaning of the Text.

The General Explanation of the Title

A1 The general explanation of the title.

The *Sutra of the Foremost Shurangama at the Great Buddha's Summit Concerning the Tathagata's Secret Cause of Cultivation, His Certification to the Complete Meaning and all Bodhisattvas' Myriad Practices* is the complete name of this Sutra.

The word *Great* has four aspects and refers to a great cause, a great meaning, a great practice, and a great fruition.

The great cause is a *Secret Cause*. It differs from other causes in that ordinary people do not know of it; adherents of externalist religions do not understand it; and those of the Two Vehicles, Sound-Hearers and Pratyekabuddhas, have not awakened to it. Thus it is great.

The great meaning is the *Complete Meaning*: the culmination of one's *Cultivating* of the Way leading to *Certification*.

The great practice includes *all the Bodhisattvas' Myriad Practices*.

The great result is *The Foremost Shurangama*. Because of these four kinds of greatness, the specific title begins with the word *da* (大) "great."

Buddha comes from a Sanskrit word that was transliterated into Chinese as *fwo two yeh* (佛陀耶) and subsequently abbreviated to

fwo (佛). Although many people think the word *fwo* is Chinese for Buddha, it is in fact only the first syllable of the full transliteration of the Sanskrit for Buddha. Buddha means "enlightened," "awakened." There are Three Kinds of Enlightenment: enlightenment of self, enlightenment of others, and the perfection of enlightened practice.

The Buddha is enlightened. His state of being is different from that known to ordinary, unenlightened people. To be enlightened oneself is not enough, however. One must also enlighten others. The enlightenment of others involves thinking of ways to cause everyone else to become enlightened.

Within the enlightenment of self and the enlightenment of others there are various stages and myriad distinctions. There are, for instance, small enlightenments, which are not complete, and there is great enlightenment, which is total. The Buddha has by himself realized great enlightenment, and he also causes others to obtain great enlightenment.

When one has perfected both the enlightenment of self and the enlightenment of others, one attains the perfection of enlightenment and practice.

The Buddha has perfected the Three Kinds of Enlightenment and so is adorned with myriad kinds of virtuous practices.

> *The three enlightenments perfected,*
> *The myriad virtues complete:*
> *Thus is he called the Buddha.*

Someone may wonder why people believe in the Buddha. It is because we ourselves are Buddhas. That is, fundamentally we are Buddhas, but at present we are confused and unable to attain certification as Buddhas. The reason I say we are basically Buddhas is that the Buddha himself said: "All living beings have the Buddha-nature; all can become Buddhas. It is only because of polluted thinking and attachments that they are unable to attain certification." The polluted thoughts of living beings shift to the north,

south, east, and west, above, and below. They suddenly pierce the heavens, suddenly drill into the earth. They reach to every conceivable place and their number is incalculable. Do you know how many polluted thoughts you have in a single day? If you do, you are a Bodhisattva. If not, you are still an ordinary person.

People become attached to possessions and constantly make distinctions of “me” and “mine.” They are unable to put aside material objects or physical pleasures. “That is my airplane.” “This is my car, the very latest model, you know.” One is attached to whatever one possesses. Men have masculine attachments, women have feminine attachments; good people have the attachments of good people; bad people have the attachments of bad people. No matter what the attachments are, those who have them cannot let them go. They keep grabbing, taking, and hanging on, getting more and more attached. The process is endless. Pleasures such as good food, a fine home, exciting entertainment, and the like are usually considered beneficial, but it isn’t certain that they are. Although you may not realize it, it is that very craving for pleasure that prevents your realization of Buddhahood. So the Buddha said, “It is only because of polluted thinking and attachments that living beings are unable to realize Buddhahood.”

In the *Shurangama Sutra* the Buddha said, “Bodhi is the ceasing of the mad mind.” The mad mind is explained as the false egocentric mind, the mind fond of status, the mind full of vain hopes and illusions, the mind that looks down on others and cannot see beyond its own achievements and intelligence. Even someone who is really ugly will consider himself to be very beautiful. Such strong attachments as these are dissolved when the mad mind is made to cease. That ceasing is Bodhi. It is an awakening to the Way; it is an enlightenment that is a first step toward the realization of Buddhahood. If you can cause the mad mind to cease, then you are well on your way.

Of the Three Kinds of Enlightenment, the Arhats’ and Pratyekabuddhas’ enlightenment of self distinguishes them from ordinary,

unenlightened people. Pratyekabuddhas awaken to the Way by cultivating the Twelve Causes and Conditions. Arhats awaken to the Way by cultivating the Dharma-door of the Four Sagely Truths. Bodhisattvas differ from Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas in that they resolve to enlighten and to benefit others.

Ultimately, the Arhats, the Pratyekabuddhas, and the Bodhisattvas are simply people who have cultivated to the point of realization. How many people are we speaking of? We could be speaking of one person who cultivates to become first an Arhat, then a Pratyekabuddha, and then a Bodhisattva by means of the Six Paramitas and the Myriad Practices; such a person embodies all three levels.

Someone else, however, may cultivate to the level of Arhatship, and then not want to go on. Once he himself has understood, such a person says: “I myself have already become enlightened. I understand. I can ignore everyone else.” He is a selfish person. He comes to a halt at the accomplishment of Arhatship and it does not occur to him to continue down the path to Pratyekabuddhahood. Others continue to Pratyekabuddhahood but do not consider progressing further. So one can say they are one person or one can say they are three people.

A Bodhisattva, however – one who enlightens himself and others – cultivates the Six Paramitas and the magnificence of the Myriad Practices, and he can continue to progress until he reaches the perfection of the Bodhisattva Way. That stage is said to be the perfection of enlightenment and practice; it is the realization of Buddhahood. The Buddha’s state of perfect enlightenment and practice distinguishes him from the Bodhisattva.

These three kinds of enlightenment can be discussed at length. When one practices them, many distinctions appear; within realizations are further realizations; within distinctions are further distinctions. The process is extremely complex.

The *Summit* is the highest point. The crown of the head is its summit; above that is heaven. It is sometimes said of people that

"the top of the head touches heaven and the feet touch the earth"; such people are indomitable. Together, the words Crown of the Great Buddha refer to the top of the great Buddha's head.

How big is the great Buddha? "The size of a six-foot-high Buddha-image?" you wonder.

No, a Buddha-image is like a mere drop in the ocean, or one fine mote of dust in a world-system. There is nothing greater than the great Buddha. He is great and yet not great. *That* is true greatness.

"Who is he?" you ask.

He is the Buddha who pervades all places. There is no place where he is and no place where he is not. No matter where you say he is, he is not there. Wherever you say he is not, he is there. What size would you say he is? There is no way to calculate how great he is, and so he is truly great – so great that he is beyond greatness.

"How can one be beyond greatness?"

No greatness can compare to his; his greatness is the most great.

"Who is he then?"

The great Buddha.

"Who is this great Buddha?"

He is you, and he is me.

"But I am not that great. And as far as I can tell, neither are you. How can you say he is you and me?" you ask. "How can you talk about it like this?"

If he did not have any connection with you and me, it would not be necessary to discuss him.

"How am I that great?" you ask.

The Buddha-nature is great, and it is inherent in us all. Just that is the incomparably great Buddha.

Now we are not only speaking of the great Buddha, we are referring to the crown of his head: his summit. And the great

Buddha's summit refers to the appearance of yet another great Buddha.

"How big is that Buddha?" you ask.

That Buddha is invisible. He is referred to in the verse that we recite before reciting the Shurangama Mantra:

The transformation atop the invisible summit
poured forth splendorous light
and proclaimed this spiritual mantra.

What is invisible can be said not to exist. How can one refer to the existence of a great Buddha when he cannot even be seen?

What cannot be seen is truly great. If it weren't so big as to be invisible, why do you suppose you couldn't see it?

"Little things are invisible, not big ones."

Really? The sky is big, but can you see all of it? No! The earth is vast, but can you see its entire surface? No. What is truly great cannot be seen.

The great Buddha's "invisible summit emits a light."

"How great is the light?"

Think it over. Could a great Buddha emit a small light? Naturally the light he emits is so great it illuminates all places.

"Does it shine on me?"

It has shone on you all along.

"Then why am I not aware of it?"

Do you want to know of it?

When the mind is pure
the moon appears in the water.
When the thoughts are settled
the sky is without a cloud.

If your mind is extremely pure, the Buddha’s light will shine on you and illumine your mind like the moonlight deeply penetrating clear water. If your mind is impure, it is like a puddle of muddy water through which no light can pass. The mind in samadhi is like a cloudless sky, a state that is inexpressibly wonderful. If you can truly purify your mind, then you can obtain the strength of the Shurangama Samadhi.

Tathagata is a Sanskrit word; it means “Thus-come One.” There is nothing which is not “thus”, and nothing which is not “come”. “Thus” refers to the basic substance of the Buddhadharma, and “come” refers to the function of the Buddhadharma. “Thus” refers to a state of unmoving suchness. “Come” means to return and yet not return. It is said,

> *Thus, thus unmoving,*
> *Come and come again,*
> *Come and yet not come.*

“Did he go?”

No.

“Did he come?”

No.

Therefore, it says in the *Vajra Sutra* that the Tathagata does not come from anywhere, nor does he go anywhere. He does not go to you nor does he come to me, yet he is right there with you and right here with me.

Tathagata is one of the Ten Names of the Buddha. Originally every Buddha had ten thousand names. In time these ten thousand names were reduced to one thousand because people got confused trying to remember them all. For a while every Buddha had a thousand names, but people still couldn’t remember so many, so they were again reduced to one hundred names. Every Buddha had a hundred different names and living beings had a hard time remembering them, so they were shortened again to ten, which are:

1. Tathagata;
2. One Worthy of Offerings;
3. One of Proper and Universal Knowledge;
4. One Perfect in Clarity and Practice;
5. Well Gone One;
6. One Who Understands the World;
7. Unsurpassed One;
8. Great Regulator;
9. Teacher of Gods and People;
10. Buddha, World Honored One.

All Buddhas have these ten names. The first, “Tathagata,” indicates that he has traveled the Path as it truly is, and has come to realize Proper Enlightenment, that is, he has accomplished Buddhahood. The second, “One Worthy of Offerings,” indicates that he is worthy of receiving the offerings of gods and people.

The *Secret Cause* is the basic substance of samadhi-power (concentration-power) inherent in everyone. It is called “secret” rather than “manifest” because, although it is fundamentally complete in every person without exception, not everyone is aware of it. And so it is a secret. The secret is the basic substance of the Tathagata’s samadhi-power and in turn it is the basic substance of the samadhi-power of all living beings. The only difference is that living beings haven’t uncovered it, and so for them it remains a secret.

Cultivating, His Certification to the Complete Meaning. The secret cause must be cultivated and certified. Although investigation of Dhyana and mindfulness of the Buddha are both means of cultivation, the cultivation referred to here is exclusively that of investigating Dhyana. Through exclusive cultivation of Dhyana one can be certified to and obtain the complete meaning, which is just no-meaning.

“Is that to say it is meaningless?”

The complete meaning is a complete certification to and realization of all worldly and world-transcending dharmas. There is no further dharma that can be cultivated, no further dharma that one can be certified as having attained. Great Master Yung Chia's "Song of Enlightenment" speaks of the complete meaning:

Have you not seen the person of the Way,
who is beyond all learning
And, in leisure does nothing?
He neither casts out false thoughts
nor seeks reality…

The person of the Way does not do anything at all. He does not cast out false thoughts because he has already gotten rid of them. Only one who is not fully rid of them still needs to cast them out. The person of the Way does not seek after truth because he has already obtained it. Only those who have not obtained it need to seek it. These lines speak of the complete meaning.

The complete meaning, which is certified to, is also said to be "complete" because the principles spoken by the Buddha are so complete that an exhaustive study of them would reach to the end of all "meaning". When one has exhausted all the principles that the Buddha spoke, then they do not exist; the meaning is complete. An incomplete meaning still has "meaning" left in it. The complete meaning is without any "meaning" at all. It is pure. When it is reached, it is the secret cause, the basic substance of proper samadhi. Reaching the basic substance, you cultivate and are certified to the complete meaning. If you do not cultivate you cannot attain the realm of the complete meaning, the great meaning which encompasses all meanings.

"But you said the complete meaning does not exist," you say.

Yes, but that very non-existence is true existence. Relative existence is not true existence. When you have been certified as having understood the complete meaning, there are no further

meanings for you to understand. You have arrived at the ultimate point.

"What is the ultimate accomplishment?"

It is the state of Buddhahood. But if you wish to reach the state of Buddhahood, you must continue to practice the Bodhisattva Way. Therefore, the title speaks of *All the Bodhisattvas' Myriad Practices*. "All" can refer to the incalculable number of Bodhisattva's practices. In general there are fifty-five Bodhisattva stages, which will be explained in detail later in the text. They include the Ten Faiths; the Ten Dwellings; the Ten Practices; the Ten Transferences; the Four Aiding Practices; the Ten Grounds; and Equal Enlightenment, which comes before the Wonderful Enlightenment of Buddhahood. At each position are millions of Bodhisattvas. The Fifty-five Stages do not refer to a mere fifty-five Bodhisattvas, but rather to fifty-five levels through which limitless Bodhisattvas pass.

The "Myriad Practices" are the numerous ways in which Bodhisattvas cultivate. There are said to be 84,000 Dharma-doors, but the title simply refers to them as "Myriad Practices". In addition to their Myriad Practices, Bodhisattvas also cultivate the Six Paramitas – also called the Six Perfections.

Paramita, a Sanskrit word, literally means "arrived at the other shore". It means to completely finish whatever you do. If you decide to become a Buddha, then the realization of Buddhahood is paramita. If you want to go to a university and get a Ph.D., obtaining the degree is paramita. If you're hungry and want to eat, then to get full is paramita. If you're sleepy, then to lie down and go to sleep is paramita. The Sanskrit word "paramita" is transliterated into Chinese as *bwo lwo mi* (波羅蜜). *Bwo lwo* is Chinese for pineapple, and *mi* means honey. So the fruit of paramita is said to be sweeter than the pineapple.

Bodhisattvas cultivate the Six Paramitas. They are:

1. giving;

2. moral precepts;
3. patience;
4. vigor;
5. dhyana concentration;
6. prajna.

There are three kinds of giving: the giving of wealth, the giving of Dharma, and the giving of fearlessness.

As to wealth: although money is one of the things people love most, it is also the dirtiest thing in the world. Just consider how many hands it passes through and how many germs it gathers. In Buddhism, money is considered unclean. First of all, its source is often unclean. It may have been stolen or embezzled.

"I've earned every penny of my money," someone may complain. "It's clean!"

Even if your money comes from legitimate sources, you still can't deny that the money itself is filthy and covered with germs. Even so, everyone still likes it. A lot of people spit on their fingers when they count money. Then they pass it back and forth, making it highly suspect as a carrier of infectious diseases. But in spite of its filth, no one is afraid of getting too much money. If you gave someone all the money in America, he would not think it was too much. But when you have a lot of money, you also have a lot of problems. You can't get to sleep at night. You are kept busy figuring out where to put it. Since money keeps you so preoccupied, it is basically not a good thing. But even though it is not a good thing, most people love it and cannot give it up. One who can give away money practices the paramita of giving and is cultivating the Bodhisattva Way.

It is not easy for people to give. Their hearts are the junction of *yin* and *yang*, the battleground of reason and desire. For instance, someone sees someone else in bitter straits without a bit of food and, being a principled person, he decides to give the poor person a dollar. He reaches into his pocket, but suddenly his desire seizes

him and he starts to have second thoughts. “Wait a minute. I can’t give him that dollar. It’s the last bit of change I’ve got. If I give it away, I won’t have any money for the bus and I’ll have to walk. I can’t do it.” His first impulse was to be generous to someone else, but it was followed immediately by a second thought: his own welfare. So he puts the money back in his pocket and doesn’t give it away. That’s the way it goes. It happens the same way on a large scale as it does on a small scale, all the way from a penny to a million dollars. The first thought is to give, the second thought concerns oneself. The giving of wealth is not easy. Some people even go so far as to think, “I’d be stupid to give my money to you. Why don’t you give yours to me?” It is easy to talk about giving, but when the time comes to do it, it is difficult.

Ever since I was young, I haven’t known how to count. Whenever I got some money, I gave it away. If I had one dollar, I gave that, and if I had two dollars, I gave them both away. I didn’t want money. Most people would consider my behavior very stupid, because I didn’t know how to help myself out. I only knew how to help others.

By benefiting others one brings forth the heart of a Bodhisattva, and those who bring forth the heart of a Bodhisattva benefit others rather than themselves. They say, “It’s all right if I have to suffer and endure distress, but I don’t want others to suffer.” Bodhisattvas always benefit others by practicing good conduct without bothering to figure out if they take a loss.

Some people spend all their time making sure they get a bargain. When they set out to buy something, they do a lot of comparison shopping until they come up with the best buy. But what they end up buying turns out to be cheap in more ways than one – things made of the “latest material” wrought from scientific experiments, things which look handsome enough but which break as soon as they are used. Although such people think they’re getting a good deal, in the end they take a loss. Instead of indulging in such calculated selfish behavior, you should work for the good of others.

The lecturing of Sutras and explaining of Dharma are the giving of Dharma. It is said:

Of all the kinds of offerings
The gift of Dharma is the highest.

The money you give can be counted, but the gift of Dharma can't be reckoned. If someone comes to a Sutra lecture and hears something that causes him to become enlightened – to genuinely understand – can you imagine how great the merit derived from such a gift would be? Because the gift of a sentence of Dharma can cause people to realize Buddhahood, it is the highest kind of giving.

The giving of fearlessness takes place, for example, when you bring calm to the victims of robbery or fire or any other catastrophe that causes them to be terrified or panic-stricken. You can calm them and comfort them by saying something like, "Don't be afraid. No matter what the problem is, it can eventually be resolved."

The second paramita practiced by Bodhisattvas is keeping moral precepts. This refers to the precepts and rules, which are one of the most important aspects of the Buddha's teachings.

What are precepts?

Precepts are the rules of moral conduct that Buddhist disciples follow. The precepts stop evil and guard against mistakes. When you maintain precepts, you don't indulge in any bad actions, but instead you conduct yourself properly and you offer up your good conduct to the Buddha.

How many kinds of precepts are there?

Laypeople who have taken refuge with the Triple Jewel – the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha – and who wish to make progress should take the Five Precepts. The five are not to kill, not to steal, not to commit sexual misconduct, not to lie, and not to take intoxicants. One vows to follow these rules for the rest of one's life. After receiving the Five Precepts, laypeople can make further progress by taking the Eight Precepts. Beyond the Eight Precepts

are the Ten Precepts of a Shramanera (novice)[1]. After receiving the Shramanera Precepts, to become fully-ordained – to become one who has left the home-life – one can take the Two Hundred Fifty Precepts of a Bhikshu (monk) or the Three Hundred Forty-Eight precepts of a Bhikshuni (nun). There are also the Ten Major and Forty-Eight Minor Bodhisattva Precepts. The first ten are called "major" because one cannot repent and reform for violation of any of these ten. If one violates the minor precepts, it is still possible to change one's faults and begin anew.

When the Buddha was about to enter Nirvana, his disciple Ananda asked him four questions, one of which was this: "When the Buddha was in the world, he was our Master; after the Buddha enters Nirvana, who will be our Master?"

The Buddha told him, "After I enter Nirvana, you should take the precepts as Master." He was indicating that people who leave the home-life – all Bhikshus and Bhikshunis – should take the precepts as Master.

Laypeople who seek to receive precepts should certainly seek them from one who has left the home-life. When the precepts are transmitted, the precept-substance must be bestowed upon the recipient by a Bhikshu. According to the Buddha's precepts, Bhikshunis cannot transmit precepts.

It is absolutely essential for people who want to cultivate the Way to receive precepts. If you can guard the pure precept-substance, then you are as beautiful as a gleaming pearl. Vinaya Master Dau Sywan ("Proclaimer of the Way"), who lived on Jung Nan Mountain during the Tang Dynasty, held the precepts so well that gods made offerings of food to him. The virtue of the precepts is very great. If you study the Buddhadharma without receiving the precepts, you will be a leaky bottle. To keep the precepts is to patch the leaks. The human body has outflows. It leaks. If you maintain the precepts for a long time, eventually there will be no outflows.

1. See Part I of the Shramanera Vinaya by Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua

This Shurangama Dharma Assembly, in which the Sutra is now being explained, offers a combination of study and practice. The schedule is strenuous, from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. daily, much more rigorous than regular school – but this is a school for ending birth and death. It is a school of complementary practice and understanding. From the study of the *Shurangama Sutra* we derive understanding, and we practice by investigating dhyana. Through the combination of practice and understanding we can stride forward over solid ground and get the job done without carelessness or negligence. Through your efforts, you may solve the problem of birth and death and obtain extremely great benefit.

An example will help to illustrate the value of combining understanding with practice. A blind man and a cripple lived together in a family compound. There were several other people living with them and helping them out. One day, however, everyone else went out – fishing, shopping, doing the sorts of things people like to do. The blind man and the cripple were the only ones left at home. On that particular day a fire broke out in the house. The blind man couldn't see and had no way to get out. The cripple could see, but he didn't have any legs. What a predicament they were in! Both of them were certainly going to burn to death.

At that time a Good and Wise Advisor gave them some advice. "You two can avoid dying. You can get out of this burning house. How? Cripple, let the blind man use your eyes. Blind man, let the cripple use your legs." They followed his advice. Did the cripple gouge out his eyes and stick them in the sockets of the blind man? Without a surgeon such a method would surely fail. To put the blind man's legs on the cripple without a physician would also be difficult. What did they do?

They made the best of the situation. The cripple climbed on the blind man's back and told the blind man where to walk. "Go left, go right, go straight ahead." The blind man had legs and, although he couldn't see, he could hear the cripple's instructions. Thanks to the timely advice, the two managed to save themselves.

When you hear this, don't mistakenly think that I am calling you blind or crippled. It is not you who are blind or you who are crippled. I am blind and crippled. But having understood the principle involved, I have spoken the analogy, which is not speaking of you or me and yet is speaking of you and me.

No one should be arrogant. Don't reflect on your singular understanding or the greatness of your wisdom. Why haven't you realized Buddhahood? It is because you are too arrogant. "I have so much knowledge," you think, but whatever you learn obstructs you. If you have a lot of knowledge, you are burdened with the obstruction of knowledge. If you have a lot of ability, your ability obstructs you so that you are unable to realize the Way. We should get rid of our thoughts of you, me, and him. Let the thoughts settle. Relax. Purify them. Empty your belly.

"What for?"

Then you can fill your belly with the wonderful flavor of clarified butter[2], the unsurpassed wonderful Dharma. Once there was a young woman, a Ph.D. candidate, who admitted that her mind was full of garbage. Now we'll use her words and say, throw out the "garbage" from your mind, and then you can listen to Sutras. Then each thing you hear will unfold into a thousand understandings.

The third paramita of the Bodhisattva is patience. There are three kinds: patience with production; patience with dharmas; and patience with the non-production of dharmas.

The fourth paramita is vigor. To be vigorous is to continually advance and never retreat. An example of extreme vigor is given in the *Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra* in the Chapter on the Past Deeds of Medicine King Bodhisattva. This Bodhisattva wrapped his body in cotton, saturated it with fragrant oils, went before the Buddhas, and burned his body as an offering.

"Why did he do that?" you ask.

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2. The five periods of the Buddha's teaching are likened to stages of refinement of milk in one analogy. The clarified butter or "ghee" stage is the most refined.

Because he felt the Buddhas' kindness was so sublime, so profound, and so great that there was just no way to repay it. Therefore, he used his own body, heart, nature, and life as an offering to the Buddhas.

"How long did his body burn?" you wonder.

For an extremely long time. There is no way to calculate for how long it burned.

When the Great Master Jr Yi ("Wise One"), Third Patriarch of the Tyan Tai School, read the *Chapter on the Past Deeds of Medicine King Bodhisattva*, he entered samadhi when he came to the passage that reads: "This is true vigor. This is a true offering of Dharma." Within samadhi he saw that the assembly at Vulture Peak, where the *Dharma Flower Sutra* was spoken by the Buddha, was still there and had not yet adjourned.

Master Jr Yi saw that Shakyamuni Buddha was still there speaking Dharma, turning the Great Dharma Wheel, teaching and transforming living beings. Thereupon Great Master Jr Yi entered the Dharma Flower Samadhi and obtained the Once-Revolving Dharani. After experiencing this he withdrew from samadhi. By means of the great wisdom he had gained, he established and systematized the Tyan Tai School. This response was evoked by the inconceivable merit and virtue of Medicine King Bodhisattva's vigor when he burned his body as an offering to the Buddhas.

Most people will react by saying, "If plucking out a single hair of my head would benefit the entire world, I still wouldn't do it." That's because they only know how to benefit themselves and not how to benefit others. They can't be called vigorous.

The fifth paramita is dhyana concentration, also called dhyana samadhi. There are Four Dhyanas and Eight Samadhis. The Nine Successive Stages of Samadhi are discussed in the text of the *Shurangama Sutra*, so they will not be dealt with in detail now. I will explain the Four Dhyanas briefly.

The First Dhyana is called the *State of Joy Apart from Production*. In the first dhyana, one's pulse stops.

The Second Dhyana is called the *State of Joy from Achieving Samadhi*. Here one's samadhi is more solid than in the first dhyana. In the second dhyana one's breath stops, but this does not mean death; it is instead another realm of consciousness. The outer breath ceases and an inner breath comes to life. Ordinary people can use only their external breath. If a person can breathe internally, he can avoid death. He can live as many years as he wants. However, one can live so long as to turn into a useless corpse-guarding ghost obsessed with the need to protect his "stinking skin-bag" of a body.

The Third Dhyana is called the *State of Wonderful Bliss Detached from Joy*. Most people who cultivate like to experience joy. However, the bliss experienced in the third dhyana, which is detached from joy, is extremely wonderful. In this dhyana, conscious thought ceases.

The Fourth Dhyana is called the *State of Pure Renunciation of Thought*. Here all thoughts are abandoned. One can know what is happening in the heavens and among people. But one should not become attached to the experience. Entering the samadhi of the Fourth Dhyana represents only a first step in cultivating the Way. One should not think that accomplishing the fourth dhyana is a special attainment. It is just the first step toward realizing Buddhahood. It is not even the accomplishment of the first stage of Arhatship.

The sixth paramita is prajna. Prajna is a Sanskrit word that may be translated as wisdom. Most people consider mundane intelligence to be wisdom. It is not. Intelligence is worldly knowledge such as that derived from the study of science, philosophy, and the like. "Wisdom" refers to the world-transcending wisdom that realizes Buddhahood. This is prajna. The word prajna is not translated because it contains many meanings and thus falls within the Five Kinds of Terms not Translated, which are:

1. terms that are secret;

2. terms that have many meanings;
3. terms that refer to something not existing in the translator's country;
4. terms that traditionally have not been translated; and
5. terms that are honorifics.

This list was first drawn up by Tripitaka Master Sywan Dzang in the Tang Dynasty.

There are Three Kinds of Prajna:

1. literary prajna;
2. contemplative prajna;
3. true-appearance prajna.

Literary prajna refers to the wisdom contained in the sutras. Contemplative prajna refers to the wisdom gained through returning the light and illumining within, through reversing the hearing to hear the self-nature. It arises when your eyes don't gaze outside but look within. With the light of wisdom of contemplative investigation, you can illumine and break through all darkness within you. When that happens you become very clear and pure inside and are no longer burdened with filth. True-appearance prajna, the most wonderful inconceivable kind of prajna, is synonymous with the "complete meaning" of which the Sutra speaks. The true appearance has no appearance, and yet there is nothing left without an appearance. If you say that it has no appearance, everything thereupon appears. Thus it is the true appearance. If you understand this, you are right next to the Buddha; you are but a step away.

The *Vajra Sutra* says, "All that has appearance is empty and false. If you see all appearances as no appearance, then you see the Tathagata." Everything that has an appearance is false. If, while in the midst of appearances, you can understand that they have no appearance, then you see the Buddha. You understand the basic substance of the Dharma and penetrate to the Dharma's source. To see the source of all dharmas is to see the Buddha.

Such an experience is easy to talk about, but difficult to attain. You can't understand just by hearing lectures; you must think of a way to travel that road. For instance, one may say, "I'd like to travel to New York, but it's so far away and flying is very expensive. I guess I won't go." However, if you never go, you'll never know what New York is like. Realization of Buddhahood is the same way. On the one hand, you want to become a Buddha, but on the other hand, it's such a long hard pull that it would take forever to get there. It's just like looking at the sea and heaving a great sigh. "Studying the Dharma is too difficult; I'll find something easier to do." If you take that attitude, you will never realize Buddhahood. If you don't want to become a Buddha, then there's nothing to talk about. But if you do then you must endure difficulties, because only through difficulty is ease attained. In China it is said, "If the winter's cold did not pierce to the bone, how could the plum blossoms be so fragrant?" The extremely sweet-smelling plum blossom of China blooms in mid-winter. As a result of enduring the bitter cold, the blossoms have an exquisite fragrance.

Every living being is endowed with true-appearance prajna, but like the "secret cause" of this sutra, it is not yet manifest within them, and they are unaware of their own inheritance. We do not realize the prajna of our own nature, its inherent true-appearance, and so we are as if poverty-stricken within the Dharma. Prajna is the wisdom we have always had. We should open this treasure-room of wisdom, and then our original face will appear. As long as we don't know that we are endowed with true-appearance prajna, we carry an undiscovered gold mine inside us. To discover the gold mine is not enough, however. We have to use manpower to mine the gold before it can be used. The sutras tell us that the gold mine of prajna exists within each one of us, but unless we mine the gold, it's not of much use to know about it. We must put in the work and vigorously resolve to cultivate. Then we can mine the prajna, and our inherent Buddha-nature will appear.

The Buddha said, "All living beings have the Buddha-nature and can realize Buddhahood." But one cannot say, "The Buddha

said I am a Buddha, so I am a Buddha even without cultivating." This is to know the gold is there and yet not bother to dig it from the ground.

This has been a general explanation of the Six Paramitas of the Bodhisattva. Everyone can decide to be a Bodhisattva and cultivate the Bodhisattva's practices. If you carry out the deeds of a Bodhisattva, then you are a Bodhisattva with an initial resolve. Bodhisattvas do not selfishly say, "Only I can become a Bodhisattva. You can't be a Bodhisattva. You can't compare to me." Not only can everyone become a Bodhisattva; everyone can become a Buddha. I believe that everyone in this assembly will attain Buddhahood someday.

Foremost Shurangama. Shurangama is a Sanskrit word that means "the ultimate durability of all phenomena." "All phenomena" refers to everything – all the mountains, rivers, the great earth, buildings, people, and things, as well as all creatures born from wombs, from eggs, from moisture, and by transformation. When one plumbs all things to their unchangeable source, one obtains the basic substance of samadhi, the samadhi of the "secret cause." When one obtains the samadhi of the "secret cause", one can then be certified as having attained the "complete meaning". When one is certified as having attained the complete meaning, one then cultivates the Six Paramitas and the Myriad Practices of a Bodhisattva and thereby attains the "great practice." When one has attained the great practice, one can then accomplish the samadhi of the ultimate durability of all things, which is the "great result".

The Great Buddha's Summit, then, refers to the wonderful advantages of the four kinds of greatness: the great cause, the great meaning, the great practice, and the great result. They can also be called the wonderful cause, the wonderful meaning, the wonderful practice, and the wonderful result. However, "wonderful" doesn't describe them completely, and so the word "great" is used.

"The ultimate durability of all phenomena" refers to samadhi. Without samadhi, the body and mind are distracted and do not work

in harmony. You may decide to go south, but your legs refuse to obey; you end up walking north. Or you may want to do good deeds, but you lose control and somehow end up committing crimes instead. A lack of consistency or constancy in carrying things out is also evidence of a lack of samadhi. In studying the *Shurangama Sutra* everyone should be firm, sincere, and constant. You should firmly resolve, "I am determined to study until I understand the principles of the *Shurangama Sutra*." You shouldn't stop in the middle of the road and turn around to go back; you shouldn't hit the drum to adjourn the meeting prematurely. Don't draw the line when you've come only half way. Don't say, "Ah, I've studied so many days and haven't understood yet. This is extremely difficult material. I don't think I'll study it any more."

With sincerity, you can study in earnest and can keep your mind on what you are doing. You are so delighted by study that all worries are forgotten. You study so industriously that you forget to eat. When you lie down at night to sleep no thoughts arise other than those of the doctrines in the Sutra.

With constancy, you don't study for a few days and then back out, feeling that studying the Buddhadharma is dry and uninteresting. You don't decide to go play in the park or find some good entertainment. You don't think up excuses: "There's no practical value in studying this stuff. It's antiquated in this scientific age," and then run away. Without constancy, you lack ultimate durability.

With cultivation of these three – firmness, sincerity, and constancy – you can be "ultimately durable" and gain samadhi-power. With samadhi-power, you will not be "turned by states": you won't be controlled by your environment. This is a general explanation of the specific title of this sutra.

Sutra. To translate the Sanskrit word "sutra", the Chinese used the character that means "to tally", because a sutra tallies above with the principles of all Buddhas and below with the opportune circumstances for teaching all living beings.

"Sutra" is also defined as a "path", for it can lead ordinary people to the position of Buddhahood. "Sutra" has four further meanings: stringing together, attracting, constant, and method. A sutra strings together the meanings within it, like beads strung on a thread. It attracts the beings for whom the teaching will be opportune. The sutras present the Dharmas appropriate to the particular needs of beings, as medicine is prescribed to cure specific illnesses. The sutra is like a magnet and living beings are like the iron filings which are attracted to the magnet. The *Shurangama Sutra* is like a magnet, and so it is called "durable". But the *Shurangama Sutra* is even stronger than a magnet. It can keep people from falling ever again. Thus it gathers in living beings so that they cannot possibly fall again into the realms of the hells, or turn into hungry ghosts, or change into animals. They are magnetized so that even if they want to run away they can't. Even if they want to fall they won't be able to. That's how wonderful the sutras are! People come to listen to a sutra lecture and once they've heard they become magnetized. They hear one passage and they want to hear the next. "This makes sense!" they exclaim. "I like the flavor. It's really sweet!" Sutras are said to be constant because from ancient times to the present day they have not changed. Not one word can be added or taken away. They are permanent and unchanging. The sutras are said to be methods, for they are revered by beings in the past, present, and future because they contain methods to cultivate the Way, realize Buddhahood, and teach and transform living beings.

The Buddhist Canon is composed of Twelve Divisions. All twelve may be found within each sutra. The Twelve Divisions are:

1. prose;
2. reiterative verses;
3. bestowal of predictions;
4. causes and conditions;
5. analogies;
6. past events;

7. present lives;
8. broadening passages;
9. previously non-existent Dharma;
10. unrequested Dharma;
11. interpolations;
12. discussions.

The first of the twelve divisions consists of the prose sections of the sutras – in Chinese, literally the "long lines". The second division, the reiterative verses, consists of verses that rephrase the meanings expressed in the prose sections of the sutras.

The third division is bestowal of predictions. In the sutra Shakyamuni Buddha may tell a Bodhisattva, "In such and such an age, you will become a Buddha. Your name will be such and such, your lifespan will be so long and in such and such a country you will teach living beings." An example is Dipankara ("Burning Lamp") Buddha's bestowing the prediction of Buddhahood upon Shakyamuni Buddha. In a former life, on the cause-ground, Shakyamuni Buddha cultivated the Bodhisattva Way so sincerely in his search for the Dharma that once he "spread out his hair to cover the mud". Why did he do that? Once in a former life, when Shakyamuni Buddha was walking down a road, he noticed a Bhikshu walking toward him. He didn't know the Bhikshu was actually a Buddha. The road that lay between them was muddy and full of puddles. "If that old Bhikshu walks through all this water, he's bound to get drenched," thought the future Shakyamuni Buddha, and out of his respect for the Triple Jewel, the ascetic lay down in the mud and water. He used his body as a mat on top of the water and invited the old monk to walk on his body to cross the puddles. There was a small portion of the puddle still exposed, and fearing the old Bhikshu would have to step in the mud, he loosened his hair and spread it out over the mud for the Bhikshu to walk on.

Who would have guessed that the old Bhikshu was a Buddha! The Buddha, whose name was Dipankara, was pleased to witness

such a sincere offering and he said, “So it is, so it is, you are this way and I am also this way.” The first “so it is” meant: “You have now made an offering to me by lying down and allowing me to walk over the top of your body.” The second “so it is” meant “In the past, I was this way, too. I also cultivated the Bodhisattva Way.” His meaning was, “You are correct.” And then Dipankara Buddha gave him a prediction, saying, “In the future you will become a Buddha named Shakyamuni.” Why did Dipankara Buddha offer this prediction? Because he was moved by the sincerity of the future Shakyamuni Buddha’s heart, and so although he usually paid no attention to other people’s affairs, he took notice of this gesture and gave him a prediction of Buddhahood.

The fourth division of the Sutra explains the causes and conditions that lie behind the speaking of various Dharmas. In the fifth division, analogies are used to make clear the wonderful aspects of the Buddhadharma. In past events, the sixth division, the sutras relate events in the former lives of Shakyamuni Buddha or of various Bodhisattvas. Present lives, the seventh division, discusses events in Shakyamuni Buddha’s present life or in the present lives of various Bodhisattvas. Broadening Dharma, the eighth division, refers to the universality of the Dharma spoken. Previously non-existent Dharma, the ninth division, refers to Dharma that has never been spoken before. Without a request from anyone, the Buddha himself emits light, moves the earth, and speaks unrequested Dharma, the tenth division. Interpolation, the eleventh division, refers to verses that express meanings that have no connection with the passages preceding or following. The twelfth division is discussions.

A verse says:

Prose and reiterations;
Interpolations;
Bestowal of predictions;
Unrequested Dharma;
Causes and conditions;

Past lives; analogies;
Discussions; never been before;
This life; broadening passages
Make up Twelve Divisions;
The Shastra of Great Wisdom
Explains them in Roll Thirty-three.

Each sutra has within it these Twelve Divisions. This is not to say that there are only twelve volumes in the Buddhist Canon, but that every section of the sutra text falls under one of these divisions.

Causes and Conditions for the Arising of the Teaching

A2 The causes and conditions for the arising of the teaching.

Teachings are the transmissions of a sage – a Buddha or Bodhisattva – in order to teach and transform living beings. The teaching arises from causes and conditions, and these come from living beings. If there were no living beings, there would be no Buddha. If there were no Buddha there would be no teaching. Therefore the teaching is established for the sake of living beings. The causes and conditions are the reasons for the teaching. They cause living beings to end birth and death. This is the reason Shakyamuni Buddha appeared in the world. The *Dharma Flower Sutra* says, "The Buddha appeared in the world because of the causes and conditions of one great matter." What is this matter? It is the problem of everyone's birth and death. Because people don't understand why they are born and why they die, they continue to undergo birth and death. Shakyamuni Buddha appeared in the world to cause living beings to understand why they are born and why they die.

Where did you come from when you were born?
Where will you go after you die?

Once born into the world, living beings are busy all their lives finding places to live, clothes to wear, and food to eat. They become so preoccupied with pursuing food, clothing, and shelter that they have no time to solve the problem of birth and death. This is how ordinary people carry on. They say, "We must work hard and keep busy to get two meals, clothes, and a place to live." Nobody is busy figuring out how to end birth and death. They don't think about it. They don't wonder, "Why did I come into this world? How did I get here? Where did I come from?"

When you meet someone, you say, "Where are you from? How long have you been here?" But people never ask these questions of themselves. They have forgotten where they came from, and they have forgotten where they are going. They forget to ask themselves, "Where am I going to go when I die?" It is just because people have forgotten to ask themselves this question that Shakyamuni Buddha came into this world to urge us to investigate the problem of birth and death.

The *Dharma Flower Sutra* says further that the Buddha appeared in the world to cause all living beings to give rise to the Buddha's knowledge and vision; to display the Buddha's knowledge and vision, to become enlightened to the Buddha's knowledge and vision; and to enter the Buddha's knowledge and vision. Originally all living beings inherently possess the Buddha's knowledge and vision. Their wisdom is identical to the Buddha's. But in a living being the wisdom is like the gold in the mine mentioned above. Before the mine is excavated the gold is not evident. Once you realize the existence of your inherent Buddha-nature, you can cultivate in accord with the Dharma; you can excavate the mine and extract the pure gold that contains no slag or impurities.

"Where is our inherent Buddha-nature? Where is our inherent wisdom?"

The Buddha-nature is found within our afflictions. Everyone has afflictions and everyone has a Buddha-nature. In an ordinary

person it is the afflictions, rather than the Buddha-nature, that are apparent. Afflictions are like ice. Our wisdom is like water. Our Buddha-nature is like moisture, which is present in both ice and water. So, too, the Buddha-nature is found within both wisdom and affliction. But while moisture is common to both ice and water, their physical properties differ. A small piece of ice is hard and can harm people if you hit them with it; in the same way you can injure people by giving rise to afflictions. But a small amount of water is harmless if you pour it over somebody; in the same way, a wise person, by the sound of his voice, can make people happy even when he's scolding them. If you use your affliction to make trouble for others, your great ignorance will ignite as soon as you speak to them. In fact, you may upset someone so much that the two of you come to blows, and certainly someone will be injured.

People can return to the original source if they can change their afflictions into wisdom. The change is analogous to the melting of ice. You can't say that the ice is not water, for the ice melts into water. You also can't say that the water is not ice, for water can freeze into ice. Their common quality is their moisture. In the same way, no one can argue that living beings are not the Buddha or that the Buddha is not a living being. The Buddha belongs to living beings, and living beings belong to the Buddha. You should understand this doctrine. You need only change and melt the ice. This is to be useful to people.

I say that water can't harm people; but someone may argue that everyone is aware of the danger of drowning and the danger brought by floods.

It is true that a lot of water can harm people; but in the analogy I referred to a small amount of water. If you want to come up with unreasonable objections, the possibilities are endless. You should grasp the meaning and not be obstructed by the particulars. Without faith your genuine wisdom won't ever manifest. Genuine wisdom arises out of genuine stupidity. When the ice turns to water, there is wisdom; when the water freezes into ice, there is stupidity.

Afflictions are nothing but stupidity. If you are thoroughly clear, then you are without afflictions.

In lecturing the sutras, I refer to principle. Don't try to use specifics to criticize principles; the two are different. You should continue to listen, and when you have heard a lot of Dharma you will understand. Having only heard a little, you are unable to put it together. "What is he talking about?" you wonder. "I don't understand." You've never heard it at all before; how could you understand? If you could understand the Dharma without ever having heard it before, your wisdom would be truly exceptional. Perhaps you have heard it in the past; but this is the first time for you in this life. The first time you hear it, it seems familiar; but even then, hearing it is a gradual process. In the same way, if you meet someone for the first time, he may seem familiar to you, but it takes several meetings before you can easily recognize him.

Once you understand that your own nature is the Buddha-nature, you can change your afflictions into Bodhi. To realize Bodhi means to become enlightened: enlightened to the fact that you should not be attached to anything. If you have attachments, you cannot become enlightened.

A Bodhisattva is not the same as you. Although he has attachments, he is not enlightened. If you had no attachments, you'd be enlightened. A Bodhisattva is not enlightened because he doesn't want to be enlightened. He wants to be together with living beings. But your thoughts are not the same as the attachments of a Bodhisattva, for he can't forsake living beings and he sees everyone as good. For this reason he doesn't want to be enlightened. One with the heart of a Bodhisattva wishes for the welfare of others and is unconcerned for himself. A Bodhisattva would willingly descend into the hells and undergo limitless sufferings if it would cause people to realize enlightenment. If there are good things to eat, he tastes a little bit and then gives the food to others. In the same way, he has already tasted a bit of the flavor of enlightenment and wants to give everyone a taste. To taste the flavor of enlightenment, you

must sever your afflictions. When you are without afflictions and devoid of ignorance, wisdom comes forth and you become liberated. That is to give rise to the Buddha's knowledge and vision.

Once you give rise to the Buddha's knowledge and vision – once you've excavated the gold mine – then you need to display the Buddha's knowledge and vision. You still need to work hard, just as it takes manpower to bring up the gold. First you must get rid of the dirt and then gradually you remove the gold from the sand. To display the Buddha's knowledge and vision, you instruct living beings in how to be truly vigorous.

Displaying requires cultivation – sitting in meditation and investigating Chan every day, until one day, while you are sitting, your contemplation will suddenly penetrate through, and you will become enlightened. You will understand, "Oh, originally it was thus. Originally it was all just this way." You will have truly solved the questions of human existence. This is to be enlightened to the Buddha's knowledge and vision.

The Buddha's knowledge and vision are not to be mistaken for the knowledge and vision of living beings. Living beings use their knowledge and vision to give rise to incessant false thoughts. Deep attachments cause them to become afflicted by the least impoliteness. "How can you be so mean to me?" you say. In fact, people will inevitably be good to you if you are truly good to them. It is not that people are not good to you but rather that you have not been good to them. If you understand this doctrine, then no one can be mean to you.

One hand claps,
but makes no sound
Only two hands clapping
can make a sound.

Everyone bows to the Buddha with utmost respect because the Buddha is truly good. This is why no one is not good to the Buddha.

"I don't believe it," someone may say. "Some people slander the Buddha."

People who slander the Buddha can't even be counted as people. They simply don't understand how to be people and so they slander the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. They don't understand the basic question of their own lives. If they knew how to be human, they wouldn't slander the Triple Jewel.

We should enter the Buddha's knowledge and vision once we are enlightened to them. This also takes work. You must work to understand and then you must work some more. You must return the light and illumine inwardly. When your light illumines your heart and you become truly wise, then you will have entered the Buddha's knowledge and vision, with no duality, no difference. The Buddha spoke the sutras in order to cause beings to give rise to, to display, to become enlightened to, and to enter the Buddha's knowledge and vision.

In general, these are the reasons that Shakyamuni Buddha, in over three hundred Dharma assemblies held for over forty-nine years, spoke the sutras and taught the Dharma in the world. With particular reference to the *Shurangama Sutra*, six causes and conditions lie behind its being spoken. The first of these six is:

I. The Dependence on Erudition and the Neglect of Samadhi-Power.

The Buddha's disciple and cousin, Ananda, was very learned; he read widely and he was very knowledgeable. He followed the Buddha for several decades and could remember the Dharma spoken at every Dharma assembly. His memory was so keen that once he heard something, he never forgot it. Ananda didn't have to force himself to remember, it came very naturally. Often, however, learned people force themselves to remember the principles they read in books and they come to rely upon their learning. "Look at me," is their attitude, "I know more than all of you. I have Ph.D.'s in science, philosophy, and literature. Why, I have more than a hundred Ph.D.'s!" Although Ananda's ability to learn came

naturally, he also relied on it too much, and he neglected developing his samadhi-power. He thought samadhi was not important. “I know a lot of things and have wisdom. That’s sufficient. Samadhi-power isn’t important. It is said that through samadhi one develops wisdom, but I already have wisdom.” So he forgot about samadhi.

The *Shurangama Sutra* was spoken for Ananda’s sake, precisely because he didn’t have sufficient samadhi-power. He had not done the work of meditation required to develop it. When others were sitting investigating Dhyana, Ananda would go read a book or write instead. The wonderful quality of the Shurangama Lecture and Cultivation Session, in which this sutra is being explained, is that it combines the actual practice of sitting in meditation with the understanding gained from the study of the Sutra. You can practice meditation in accord with your new understanding. Through the application of effort, you can become enlightened. But it is essential both to develop samadhi and to acquire learning.

In other words, Ananda hadn’t cultivated true-appearance prajna; he thought he could realize Buddhahood through literary prajna alone. He thought that since he was the Buddha’s cousin, the Buddha, who had realized Buddhahood, would certainly help him realize Buddhahood, too. Thinking that it didn’t really matter whether he cultivated or not, he ended up wasting a lot of time.

One day, as the *Shurangama Sutra* relates, Ananda went out to receive alms by himself. He took his bowl and went from house to house. While walking alone on the road, he encountered the daughter of Matangi. Ananda was particularly handsome, and when Matangi’s daughter saw him, she was immediately attracted to him. But she didn’t know how to snare him. So she went back and told her mother, “You absolutely must get Ananda to marry me. If you don’t, I’ll die.”

Now the mother, Matangi, belonged to the religion of the Kapilas, the “tawny-haired,” and she cultivated this religion’s mantras and dharma-devices, which were extremely effective.

Since Matangi really loved her daughter, she used a mantra of her sect – a mantra that they claimed had come from the Brahma heaven – to confuse Ananda. Ananda didn't have any samadhi-power, so he couldn't control himself. He followed the mantra and went to Matangi's daughter's house, where he was on the verge of breaking the precepts.

The first five precepts prohibit killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and the taking of intoxicants; and Ananda was about to break the precept against sexual misconduct. The Buddha knew about it as it was happening. Realizing his cousin was in trouble, he quickly spoke the *Shurangama Mantra* to break up the former Brahma Heaven mantra of the Kapila religion. Ananda's confusion had made him as if drunk or as if he had taken dope – he was totally oblivious to everything. But when the Buddha recited the *Shurangama Mantra*, its power woke Ananda up from his confusion, and there he was wondering how he had gotten himself into such a situation.

He returned, knelt before the Buddha, and cried out in distress. "I have relied exclusively on erudition and have not perfected any strength in the Way. I haven't any samadhi-power. Please, Buddha, tell me how the Buddhas of the ten directions have cultivated so they were able to obtain samadhi-power." In reply the Buddha spoke the *Shurangama Sutra*. This was the first reason that it was spoken. The second reason it was spoken was:

II. To Warn About Those With Insane Wisdom Who Cherish Deviant Thoughts.

There are many intelligent people in the world who, despite their intellectual ability, do not follow proper paths, but instead use their knowledge in ways that harm people. This is deviant thought. They harbor deviant thoughts and have no desire to put an end to them, because they think they are correct. They outsmart themselves and act in a very confused way. The Sutra issues a warning about them.

There is a proverb that says:

Intelligence is helped by hidden virtue.
Hidden virtue leads you to enter the path of intelligence.
Those who do not practice hidden virtue,
but make use of intelligence alone,
Will be defeated by their own intelligence.

People are intelligent because in past lives they undertook virtuous practices. Perhaps they studied hard in past lives, or they read many Buddhist sutras. But intelligence is established by doing this good work in secret. It is "hidden virtue" that others do not see. Intelligence does not come to people who do a good deed and then strike the gong, beat the drum, and put an ad in the paper or on television saying, "I, so-and-so, have just now done something good." Such a person may have done good deeds, but this is not hidden virtue. Good deeds that are done unknown to anyone are hidden virtue; they are genuine good deeds. So it is said:

Good done hoping others will notice
it is not true good.
Evil done fearing others will discover it
is great evil.

People who want the good they do to be known haven't done genuine good; they're just being greedy for a good reputation. The very greatest kind of evil is done secretly in the fear that people will find out.

Hidden virtue practiced in the past may endow us with intelligence, but if we don't use our intelligence correctly, if we don't practice hidden virtue and do good deeds, but instead do evil, our intelligence defeats us and we defeat our intelligence. It becomes merely a petty knowledge, a petty intelligence, not true intelligence.

For example, the great general Tsau-Tsau of the Three Kingdoms Period in China was extremely intelligent, but as

deceptive as a ghost. But great Emperor Yao of China was said to have divine wisdom. Wise people are sometimes even called gods. But, one should not view gods too highly in the Buddhadharma. They do not hold a very high position. They are simply Dharma Protectors whose job is to protect the Triple Jewel of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

One of great good who falls will join the ranks of evil. If someone who does great evil recognizes it and changes, he can be considered a person of great good because he has had the courage to change. However, when someone who ordinarily does good deeds decides to do evil and cheat people because he doesn't notice any particular response to his former conduct, he thereby becomes a very evil person since he is one who clearly knows what is right and intentionally does wrong.

A person with "insane wisdom" does upside-down things – improper things – and still feels he is correct. He may go so far as to commit murder and say: "If I hadn't killed that man, he might have killed others. But because I have killed him, he won't kill anyone else." In truth, the victim was not a potential murderer at all, but the killer had a grudge against him. This is deviant thought. Someone basically in error makes up a rationale for his behavior; he makes up a fine story to avoid the judgment of the courts. Although he is wrong, he is very convincing and he wins his case. This is insane wisdom. The *Shurangama Sutra* warns people against making arguments based on deviant thoughts. It warns people who do this not to cherish deviant thoughts, not to be convinced that they are right, but to change their ways and to correct their thinking so they may return to the proper path, to proper thought.

The third reason for the speaking of the Sutra is:

III. To Point to the True Mind and Manifest the Basic Nature.

The *Shurangama Sutra* points directly to our mind so we may see our nature and realize Buddhahood.

"What is this mind?"[3]

It is the true mind, which cannot be seen. The heart within your chest that you can see is merely the flesh-heart, the only function of which is to keep you alive. It is not the true mind. It certainly cannot lead you to genuine understanding. If the heart within your chest were the true mind, it should be able to accompany you when you die. However, a person's body remains after death and the flesh heart is still within it. So the flesh heart is not your true mind. Your true mind is the Buddha nature.

"Where is the Buddha nature?"

It is "not outside or inside or in the middle." The Sutra text will explain this principle in great detail. The Sutra will also explain the "ten instances of manifesting the seeing-nature," that is, one's true mind. This is the third reason the Sutra was spoken: to point out the pure nature and bright substance of the eternally dwelling true mind, which neither comes nor goes, neither moves nor changes. It is the basic substance, without defilement; its nature is pure, its substance, bright.

The fourth reason the Sutra was spoken is:

IV. To Display the Samadhi of the Nature and to Exhort Us to Actual Certification.

There are many Dharma-doors in the cultivation of samadhi. Externalists also develop samadhis; but in cultivating samadhis, if one is off at the beginning even by a hair's breadth, one will miss the mark in the end by a thousand miles. Therefore it is necessary to cultivate proper samadhi, and to avoid cultivating deviant samadhi. The samadhis cultivated by externalists are deviant samadhis, not proper samadhis. Because their samadhis are not the proper samadhi of the true nature, they will never achieve sagehood, no matter how long they cultivate. It is said:

When the nature is in samadhi,
demons are subdued and every day is blissful;

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[3] In Chinese the word for "mind" is also the word for "heart."

When false thoughts do not arise
everywhere is peaceful.

Why do people have demonic obstacles when they cultivate? Why do karmic obstacles arise? It is just because people's natures lack samadhi. If the nature is in samadhi, all demons can be subdued.

There are many kinds of demons. This sutra explains fifty kinds of "skandha demons". Actually there are many, many demons: heavenly demons, earth demons, human demons, ghost demons, and weird demons. Heavenly demons are the demon-kings in the heavens who come to disturb your dhyana concentration. Earth demons that dwell on the earth, human demons, ghost demons, weird demons, and strange creatures also all come to disturb your dhyana concentration.

"Why do they do this?"

Because before you attain Buddhahood you are a member of the demons' family. When you decide to leave the family of demons, cultivate dhyana concentration, end birth and death, and break through the turning wheel, the demons are still fond of you. They love you and can't let you go. Therefore they come to bother your spirit and disturb your dhyana concentration.

If you have no concentration-power, you can be turned by the demon-states and end up following them. If you have concentration-power, you won't be turned. You will be "thus, thus unmoving / clear and eternally bright." To be "thus, thus unmoving" is to have concentration power. To be "clear and eternally bright" is to have wisdom-power. With the combined powers of concentration and wisdom, no demon can move you. But if you have no concentration or wisdom-power, you will follow the demons and become their children and grandchildren. It is extremely dangerous.

The reason externalists do not develop the concentration of the nature is because they apply effort to the branches, not the root; they work on the false shell of a body. Their mistake is to identify the sixth consciousness, the ordinary mind, with their true mind. As

a result of their cultivation they get a little of the experience of still quiescence but what they experience is not actual. They force themselves to keep their thoughts from arising, but they haven't dug out the root of their polluted thinking, so they can't end birth and death. It is like trying to use a rock to prevent grass from growing. When the rock is removed, the grass grows right back. When cultivators of external religions relax their efforts, it is just like removing the rock. Their methods are not ultimate.

In dhyana cultivation, one investigates the meditation topic, "Who is mindful of the Buddha?" By investigating this topic one sweeps away all dharmas and leaves all appearances. In seeking for "who?" one penetrates to the root of all polluted thinking and rips it out. If you use this method, the day will come when your contemplation will suddenly penetrate through and you will suddenly become enlightened. Then you will know whether your nostrils are pointing up or down. At present you don't know whether your nostrils face up or down. Once you are enlightened, you will know, and then you're on your way.

When Shakyamuni Buddha spoke the *Shurangama Sutra*, there were in India various religious groups that did not discuss enlightenment. Rather, they imitated the behavior of cows or dogs. This strange practice came about because someone, while sitting in samadhi, had seen a cow reborn in the heavens, and this person concluded, "I should study the behavior of cows." He began to eat grass, to live outside in a cowshed, and to learn how to even sleep like a cow. When he wasn't sleeping he cultivated a bit of samadhi, but he had no genuine accomplishment; it was deviant samadhi.

Another religion of that time came about because someone had a confused dream in which a dog was born in the heavens. This person decided that if he imitated the behavior of dogs, he too would be born in the heavens. He modeled himself after a dog in every way; guarding the door, eating things dogs eat, and sleeping the way dogs do. But in the end such cultivation did not bring ultimate accomplishment.

Another old cultivator of another religion cultivated the No-Thought Samadhi, in which he didn't think of anything. He was without polluted thinking, and finally in his cultivation he was born in the No-Thought Heaven. But birth in the No-Thought Heaven is not ultimate, and eventually he fell. This too is considered a deviant samadhi. All these methods taught by externalists are not ultimate, not fundamental, they are not cultivation of the self-nature, our origin.

Using the ordinary mind and its false thinking to cultivate the Buddhadharma is like trying to make rice by cooking sand. It will never succeed. You can cultivate for countless ages, but you won't escape the turning wheel, you won't realize Buddhahood. It is essential for those of you who wish to cultivate to meet a Master who has genuine understanding, in order for you to be able to attain genuine samadhi power. In order to attain real samadhi-power, you will certainly have to undergo the tests of demons, also. As I mentioned earlier, there are many kinds of demons: there are external demons and internal demons. The external demons are not too difficult to subdue, but the demons produced in your own mind are hard to defeat.

Certain demons that bring sickness are also hard to subdue. When I was about seventeen or eighteen, I studied the Buddhadharma and yet was very arrogant. My arrogance prompted me to say an insane thing: "Most people are afraid of demons, but I have no fear of them. In fact, demons fear me." Wouldn't you say that was an insane remark? "No matter what kind of demons they are – heavenly demons, earth demons, spirit demons, ghost demons, human demons – no matter what kind, I have no fear of them." After I finished spouting off, what do you suppose happened? I was attacked by a sickness demon, and then it was I who feared the demons, not the demons who feared me, because sickness inhibits one's movements like a yoke and chains. My body wouldn't obey my commands. I told it to walk, but it wouldn't; I told it to sit, but it couldn't. From morning to night I lay on the bed unable to eat or drink. The demon had me trapped. Then I realized what I had said

was all wrong. I had boasted that I wasn't afraid of demons, but now when the sickness-demon caught me I was powerless. I was so sick that I was oblivious to everything. It seemed certain I would die. But just as I was lingering on for one last breath – when I was almost dead but not quite – another thing happened to me. I saw the Three Filial Sons Wong of Manchuria: two monks – one a Taoist Master and one a Buddhist Bhikshu, and one a layman. The three came and told me to come out and play, and I followed them outside. It was very strange: just outside the door I started to walk, but my feet weren't touching the ground. Although I wasn't in an airplane, I was in empty space. It wasn't like mounting the clouds and driving the fog, however, it was like being enveloped in space. I walked on the tops of houses and soon they looked very small, and I could see lots of people below.

We went to all the famous temples, mountains, and great rivers. We went to the four sacred mountains in China: *Wu Tai* (Five Peaks), *E Mei*, *Jyou Hua* (Nine Flowers), and *Pu Two*. Wherever we went there were lots of temples and lots of people. We didn't stop with China, however, and soon were flying over foreign lands where the people were fair-haired and blue-eyed. We went from place to place so quickly that it was like watching a movie, where frame after frame flashes on the screen in a constant change of scene, except there was no projector or screen, and I actually went to the places I saw.

After seeing and hearing many things, I arrived back at my own front door. I opened the door and looked into my house, and there on the bed was another me. The moment I realized there were two of me I became one, and my breath and pulse returned. "He hasn't died!" exclaimed my father and mother, who were seated beside me. "He's alive!" Then I realized that when I had seen myself on the bed unable to move, I had been sick. I asked my father and mother about it, and they said I had been in a coma for seven or eight days, and had seemed dead. So, I am a living dead man. Even I myself thought I was dead, and then I was born anew. After that I wasn't so insane. I never said that I didn't fear demons or that

demons feared me. Take my advice: whatever you do, don't say things like that. If you say, "I'm not afraid of anything," in the future you will encounter something that will frighten you. But to say "I'm afraid of everything" is also incorrect. In general, don't even bring up such useless topics.

Prior to my illness, I was an instructor at the Way-Virtue Society. I lectured on the advantages of benevolence, righteousness, the Way, and good conduct. Not only did I just exhort others to do good deeds, I myself also practiced benefiting others. I had cultivated to the point that I felt I had a little skill. One day I read an article about Jang Sywan's exemplary way of life and I decided I wanted to be just like him. I vowed to heaven that I would practice the deeds of Jang Sywan. But after I made the vow I regretted it. "Of what use is imitating him?" I wondered doubtfully. And, strangely enough, that very evening a demon came to test me to see if I really could keep my vow. If you make vows, the Bodhisattvas may come to test you. The point is, don't speak arrogantly; take care to avoid something that pleases you or in time something will happen to cause you to be displeased.

Keep your mind on cultivation of the Way. Don't use the mind that ordinary people use but rather a mind that is intent on the Way. Cultivate the samadhi of the nature and seek actual accomplishment. Actual accomplishment is the opposite of what is empty and false. One whose accomplishment is empty and false may suddenly think, "I have just realized Buddhahood," and while sitting in dhyana he may feel that his body is like the Buddha's, emitting light and moving the earth. Actually there isn't anything going on at all. The experience is empty and false: it is not the accomplishment of the Way.

One may think: "Sitting here in dhyana, I saw the Buddha give me a prediction, saying, 'You will soon realize Buddhahood. Don't bother to cultivate. You are a Buddha already.'" This, too, is a false experience; it is not genuine accomplishment of the Way.

Shakyamuni Buddha accomplished the Way beneath the Bodhi tree. He sat there for forty-nine days, and then one evening, he saw a star and awakened to the Way. “Strange indeed, strange indeed, strange indeed,” he said, “all living beings have the Buddha-nature. All can become Buddhas.”

However, before he had accomplished Buddhahood, a heavenly demon came to test him. It transformed into a beautiful woman who came before the Buddha and spoke seductively, trying to get him to abandon his cultivation and marry her instead. But the Buddha, from within his samadhi, was not moved by the sight of this exquisite creature. He just thought, “You think you are really beautiful, but actually you are an old hag. Countless wrinkles line your face and from your eyes and nose flow filthy tears and mucus. There is snot in your nose and phlegm and saliva in your mouth. Your whole body is filthy, and yet you still come and try to cheat me.” The Buddha contemplated this thought from within samadhi and transformed the demon’s power so that the demon turned into an old woman. Her hair turned white, her teeth fell out, and her nose began to run with snot. She looked wretched. “Look at yourself,” the Buddha told the demon. The demon looked and was so ashamed that she ran away. Many such demons came to test the Buddha, but the Buddha was never turned. Since he was not turned by the demons, he accomplished the Buddha-Way.

When people work hard cultivating the Way, they are likely, at crucial stages of development, to undergo the tests of demons. Before you have any skill the demons won’t test you, but once you develop a little skill, they will try you out. If you don’t recognize it as a test, then you may run off and join the retinue of demons. If you want to cultivate to the point of actual accomplishment, you must develop the samadhi of the nature. When you cultivate by working on the samadhi of the nature, and your nature is not moved, you will naturally have samadhi-power and your accomplishment will naturally be true and actual, not false. If you are moved by demons, then your samadhi is not true and proper but is rather a deviant samadhi, which will not lead you to Buddhahood.

Earlier I mentioned the deviant samadhis developed by people who studied the behavior of cows and dogs. How did the cow and dog they imitated happen to get born in the heavens? In a former life, the cow had cultivated the Ten Good Deeds, but before that it had done many bad things. The retribution for the evil deeds caused it to be born as a cow and the reward for its cultivation of the Ten Good Deeds led it, at death, to be reborn in the heavens. The same was true for the dog. Not knowing the past causes and conditions of the cow and the dog that led to their rebirth in the heavens, these people thought that it was merely being a cow or a dog in the present life that led to the heavenly reward. So they blindly imitated the behavior of cows and dogs. Nothing came of their cultivation, however, and they couldn’t obtain actual accomplishment.

Actual accomplishment means the genuine realization of one’s own perfect, clear inherent wisdom and samadhi-power, where samadhi aids wisdom and wisdom aids samadhi in a mutual, perfect, unobstructed interpenetration. It is to realize the true fundamental substance; it is to obtain one’s own true mind.

The fifth reason the Buddha spoke this sutra is:

V. To Destroy Upside-down Thoughts and Dispel Subtle Delusions.

Upside-down thoughts are improper. People are really upside-down. Well, people aren’t actually upside-down; their thinking is. When Ananda and Matangi’s daughter returned to the Buddha, Ananda bowed and asked for instruction. After hearing it, he spoke a verse, which begins:

The wonderfully deep dharani,
the unmoving honored one,
The foremost Shurangama King
is rarely found in the world.

The “unmoving honored one” is the Shurangama Samadhi. The entire sentence refers to Shakyamuni Buddha. It is rare because, as the third line of the verse says, “It melts away my inverted thoughts

gathered in a million kalpas." Life after life, for limitless, boundless kalpas, Ananda had been striking up upside-down thoughts, thinking of improper things. "Upside-down thoughts" refer to any of the thoughts worldly people have. The function of the *Shurangama Sutra* is to destroy and melt away these inverted polluted thoughts and to dispel our subtle delusions.

Subtle delusions may be so subtle that the eyes can't see them, the ears can't hear them, and the mind cannot form thoughts about them. As soon as we give rise to one unenlightened thought, the Three Subtle Delusions arise, although the space of a thought is very short. Delusion can be likened to dust. If there is dust flying about in a room where there is a mirror, the mirror will immediately catch a lot of dust particles. These particles of dust will go unnoticed until they become so thick that they cloud the mirror. Our subtle delusions are like the dust on the mirror.

Fundamentally, our own nature is like a bright mirror – it is the Great Perfect Mirror-Wisdom. But because of the production of these fine delusions, the bright mirror becomes coated and grows dimmer and dimmer. Great Master Shen Syou's verse says:

The body is a Bodhi tree,
The mind like a bright mirror stand.
Time and again brush it clean;
And let no dust alight.

Some people say this verse is incorrect. I say it is correct. Why? He is telling us to constantly cultivate, to time and again brush clean the mind so that it doesn't catch any dust. Brush it morning and night, for when you have cleared up the dust of the subtle delusions, the mirror of your own nature will shine brightly. Before one has become enlightened, one should honor this doctrine and cultivate in accord with it.

The Great Master, the Sixth Patriarch, said in reply:

Originally Bodhi has no tree,
The bright mirror has no stand.
Originally there is not a single thing,
Where can the dust alight?

This verse was spoken by one who was already enlightened. One who is enlightened can understand and cultivate in accord with this verse.

It is said:

When not one thought arises,
the entire substance manifests.
When the six roots suddenly move,
one is covered by clouds.

When not one thought is produced, the Buddha-nature and samadhi appear. When your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind suddenly move and take control, it is as if the sky has suddenly clouded over. So one must put an end to inverted false thoughts and dispel the subtle doubts and then one can very quickly realize Buddhahood. Unfortunately, though, no one wants to realize Buddhahood. People would rather flow along in the Five Turbidities, flowing along and forgetting to return. They take suffering as bliss, turn their backs on enlightenment and unite with defiling objects. Although they have not ended birth and death, they nonetheless think themselves pretty fine, saying, “Look at me, I am intelligent and handsome. Everyone who sees me likes me and I understand what others don’t.” Actually such people are just like mirrors attracting dust. The more dust that gathers, the dimmer the mirror gets until it reflects no light at all. They may think themselves smart in this present life, but wait and see: perhaps ten lives from now they will end up as stupid as pigs. Therefore, in this life we must decide where we will be going – we must recognize

clearly what our destiny will be, what path we will take. Then there is hope.

The sixth reason the Buddha spoke this Sutra is:

VI. To Clarify the Two Doors for the Benefit of Living Beings of the Present and Future.

The Two Doors are the Dharma-door of Level Equality, which is the Actual Dharma, and the Expedient Door, which is the Provisional Dharma. Provisional Dharma is not real, but is temporary and impermanent. Actual Dharma is real and forever unchanging. There are two Dharmas: Provisional and Actual.

The Expedient Dharma, which is the Provisional Dharma, may be illustrated by the following event:

Once Shakyamuni Buddha saw a child toddling toward a well. The child was on the brink of falling into the water and would surely drown before anyone could reach it. The Buddha knew that if he called to the child to come back that it wouldn't listen, but would keep right on running. He said instead, "I have candy in my hand. Come back quickly and I will give my candy to you." When the child heard there was candy to eat it turned around and came back. Actually there wasn't anything in the Buddha's hand. But was the Buddha lying? Was he cheating the child? No. The child was just about to fall into the well. If the Buddha hadn't enticed it in such a way as to cause it to turn immediately, it would have drowned. The Buddha extended his empty fist and said there was candy in it. The child came because it wanted to eat candy.

The Provisional Dharma-door is used to teach and transform living beings. Basically there isn't anything at all, but the Buddha says to living beings, "I have treasures. Come to me and I will give you a jewel – a priceless gem – and other fine things." Because living beings are greedy, they follow along to reap the advantages. Ultimately they have been enticed by an expedient Dharma-door. The Provisional Dharma, then, refers to the clever skill-in-means used to save living beings.

The Dharma-door of Level Equality – the Actual Dharma – and the Provisional Dharma-door were both used in speaking this sutra. By means of these two Dharma-doors living beings are led to separate themselves from suffering and to obtain bliss, so that they eventually may give proof to the result and realize Buddhahood.

The Two Doors benefit living beings of the present and future. The “present” here can refer to the time when the Buddha taught, and it can also refer to now. Living beings of the present and future can obtain the benefit of being enriched by the Dharma. To make the Two Doors understood for the benefit of living beings of the present and future is the last of the six reasons for the arising of the teaching.

The Division and The Vehicle

A3 The division in which the Sutra is included and the vehicle to which it belongs.

The "division" refers to the Tripitaka, the Three Treasuries of the Buddhist canon: the Sutra Treasury, the Vinaya Treasury, and the Shastra Treasury. The Three Treasuries correspond to the Three Non-outflow Studies: precepts, samadhi, and wisdom. The Sutra Treasury teaches samadhi, the Vinaya Treasury teaches precepts, and the Shastra Treasury teaches wisdom. In sutras one often sees the title "Tripitaka Master." This refers to one who has mastered all three treasuries.

Although sutras may include sections dealing with the vinaya or with wisdom, they predominately deal with the study of samadhi. For instance, the *Shurangama Sutra* teaches people how to cultivate dhyana concentration. This has already been mentioned as the fourth reason that the Buddha spoke this sutra: to display the samadhi of the nature and to exhort us to actual accomplishment. There is a brief section in the Sutra on the Four Unalterable Aspects, and this is an explanation of Vinaya. But since the Sutra is primarily devoted to a discussion of samadhi, it is not classed as Vinaya, but as a sutra.

The "Vehicle" refers to the Two Vehicles in Buddhism: the Great Vehicle (the Mahayana) and the Small Vehicle (the Theravada). The Small Vehicle is like a very small cart, which can

only seat a few people. It is the vehicle of the Sound-Hearers and Pratyekabuddhas. The Great Vehicle is the Bodhisattva Vehicle, that is, like a limousine, which can seat many people. This sutra expounds Great Vehicle Dharma for teaching Bodhisattvas, of whom the Buddhas are protective and mindful. As instruction for Bodhisattvas, it causes Arhats to turn from the small and go toward the great, to resolve their minds on Bodhi and cultivate the Bodhisattva Way. For instance, when Ananda returned from the house of Matangi's daughter to where Shakyamuni Buddha was, he respectfully requested the Buddha to instruct him in the "path to Bodhi, which all Thus-Come-Ones of the past have cultivated." Shakyamuni Buddha's answer to his question is the *Shurangama Sutra*, a Dharma cultivated by Bodhisattvas. Therefore this sutra is classed as a Great Vehicle rather than a Small Vehicle Dharma.

The Depth of the Meaning and Principle

A4 The examination of the depth of the meaning and the principle.

To which of the teachings do the principles discussed in the Sutra belong? The Tyan Tai School describes the following Four Teachings:

1. the Storehouse Teaching;
2. the Connecting Teaching;
3. the Separate Teaching;
4. the Perfect Teaching.

The Storehouse Teaching, or Tripitaka Teaching, refers to the Dharmas of the Small Vehicle. It includes the Abhidharma and the Agama sutras. Agama is sometimes interpreted "incomparable Dharma" but even so it is still the teachings of the Small Vehicle.

The Connecting Teaching connects with the Storehouse Teaching that precedes it and with the Separate Teaching that follows it.

The Separate Teaching differs from what comes before and after it. It is not the same as the Connecting Teaching that precedes it nor the Perfect Teaching that follows.

The fourth of the teachings as described by the Tyan Tai is the Perfect Teaching. Of these four, the *Shurangama Sutra* belongs to the Separate Teaching.

The Syan Shou School makes Five Divisions:

1. the Small Teaching;
2. the Beginning Teaching;
3. the Final Teaching;
4. the Sudden Teaching;
5. the Perfect Teaching.

The Small Teaching coincides with the Storehouse Teaching of the Tyan Tai division. The Beginning Teaching includes both the Connecting and the Separate Teachings of the Tyan Tai. The Final, Sudden, and Perfect Teachings are all contained in the Perfect Teaching division of the Tyan Tai. Although the names differ, the principles are the same.

The Small Teaching refers to the Small Vehicle Teachings. The Beginning Teaching refers to the beginning of the Great Vehicle Teaching. It was spoken for those who understood only the emptiness of people and had not yet realized the emptiness of dharmas. They were not yet free of their attachment to dharmas.

The Final Teaching is the Great Vehicle Dharma. It is for those who understand the emptiness of people and the emptiness of dharmas, the doctrine of the Great Vehicle. Speaking of the emptiness of people and dharmas, I am reminded of a story that is on the public record.

When Shakyamuni Buddha lived in the world, people often asked him to accept vegetarian meal-offerings. Following the meal it was customary for the host to go before the Buddha, bow, and request Dharma. If the Buddha was not present, then the host would ask the Buddha's disciples to accept the offering and in turn the disciples would speak Dharma for the host.

One day the Buddha and his great Bhikshus left the Jeta Grove at the city of Shravasti, where they were living, and went out to accept an offering of food, leaving behind only one small Shramanera (novice monk) to watch the door. After the Buddha had departed, an Upasaka (layman) came to the monastery to request

that a member of the Sangha come and accept offerings at his home on behalf of the Triple Jewel. Finding that the Bhikshus and the Buddha had all gone out, he said to the one small Shramanera who was left, “That’s okay, I’ll invite you, Shramanera, to come and accept my offering. Come with me.” The small Shramanera nervously consented to accompany him: nervous because he had never gone out by himself to accept an offering before. He’d always gone with the other Bhikshus. Once he found himself obligated to speak Dharma, he realized he didn’t have any idea what to say. Although this concern weighed on him, he accompanied the host who had so sincerely asked him to go and accept the meal-offering. After they had eaten, the inevitable happened. The host very respectfully turned to the small Shramanera, bowed deeply, and requested Dharma. As an expression of his sincerity, the host kept his head bowed as he knelt before the small Shramanera, waiting for him to speak Dharma. There sat the small Shramanera staring at his host prostrate before him. And then what do you suppose happened? Without uttering a word, he slipped off his chair, tiptoed outside, and beat a hasty retreat back to the Jeta Grove. Naturally he felt ashamed at having eaten his fill and then run away without speaking the Dharma.

For a long time the host knelt with his head bowed. But finally, having heard nothing, he lifted his head to steal a peek and he saw that there was no one in the seat before him. The small Shramanera had disappeared. At the moment he saw that the Shramanera was gone, he became enlightened. He awoke to the emptiness of people and the emptiness of dharmas. “Haaaa! So that’s the way it is!” he exclaimed, and wished immediately to seek certification of his enlightenment. Naturally he headed for the Jeta Grove in search of the small Shramanera.

Meanwhile the small Shramanera, petrified that his host would pursue him in quest of the Dharma, had run back to the Jeta Grove, headed straight for his room, slammed the door, and locked himself in. Who would have guessed that not long after he had locked the door, he would hear a knock? The little Shramanera stood frozen

with fear without making a sound on the other side of the door. He was totally panic-stricken. After all, he had eaten the host's food and now the host had come demanding the Dharma. His nervousness reached such an extreme that at the height of his anxiety, suddenly he became enlightened and also awakened to the emptiness of people and the emptiness of dharmas.

This story illustrates that it is not certain under what circumstances one will become enlightened. Perhaps you will become enlightened by getting nervous. Or perhaps happiness will cause you to become enlightened. Any experience you stumble on may bring enlightenment. Some hear the sound of the wind and become enlightened. Some listen to the flow of water and become enlightened. Some become enlightened upon hearing a wind-chime; others upon hearing a bell ring.

"I have heard all those things many times. Why haven't I become enlightened?" you may ask.

How should I know why you haven't become enlightened? You must wait for enlightenment until your time arrives, just as you must wait for food to be cooked before you can eat it. You must wait for the opportunity to ripen. When the opportunities are ripe, then anything you run into can cause you to become enlightened. The Patriarchs of the past in China have become enlightened under many different circumstances. It is only necessary that you continue to cultivate and investigate the Buddhadharma with determined and concentrated effort. If you do that, then one day you will become enlightened. If you are already enlightened, so much the better. If you aren't enlightened, you should go slowly and wait. Don't be nervous. Don't be so anxious that you can't sleep or eat.

The Final Teaching is for those who have awakened to the emptiness of people and dharmas. It is the entrance into the Great Vehicle Teaching. The Final Teaching instructs Bodhisattvas. It is not however the ultimate teaching. It is surpassed by the Sudden and Perfect Teachings. The Perfect Teaching explains the unob-

structed perfect interpenetration of all things. Everything is originally the Buddha. The *Dharma Flower Sutra*, a Perfect Teaching, says that all living beings will become Buddhas in the future. That sutra says: “If people who are very scattered and confused enter a stupa or temple and say ‘Namo Buddha’ but once, they can all realize the Buddha’s Way.” When people enter stupas or temples to bow to the Buddha they should be sincere and intent upon what they are doing. But here, the *Dharma Flower Sutra* refers to an insincere person who enters a temple and casually recites “Namo Buddha.” Due to just that one recitation of “Namo Buddha” he will become a Buddha in the future.

I am reminded of another story that is a matter of public record. When you recite the Buddha’s name, you should transfer the merit to all living beings; you shouldn’t just recite for your own sake. When you recite the name of a Buddha even once and dedicate the merit and virtue from your recitation to all living beings, you thereby increase the merit and virtue of the recitation, and you make it penetrate without obstruction.

Once, Shakyamuni Buddha went to a certain country to collect alms, accompanied by all of his disciples except Mahamaudgalyayana only to find that no one there would give them offerings. Neither the king, nor his government officials, nor the citizens made offerings to the Buddha or his disciples. Later, however, when Mahamaudgalyayana arrived in that country, there was a complete change of heart. The king, the officials, and all the citizens very respectfully gathered around to welcome Mahamaudgalyayana and to bow to him. They beseeched him to let them know what he needed so they could make offerings to him. The Buddha’s disciples did not understand why the Buddha, one of such great virtue, received no offerings from the people of this country, while when the Buddha’s disciple arrived, the whole town turned out to greet him and everyone made offerings to him. “What’s the meaning of this?” the disciples asked the Buddha.

The Buddha told his disciples: "The great officials and the citizens made no offerings to me because in a past life I failed to set up conditions with them and consequently we have no affinity with one another. Once long, long ago, ages prior to this one, Mahamaudgalyayana was a firewood gatherer. One day while picking up firewood he bumped against a nest of bees, and they swarmed out to attack him. Mahamaudgalyayana simply recited the Buddha's name and made a vow saying, 'Namo Buddha. You bees, don't sting me! In the future when I have realized the Way, you will be the first ones I take across to Buddhahood. Renounce your evil thoughts and stop harming people.' As a result of this vow, the bees did not sting him. Eventually the queen bee became the king of this country and the drones and workers became the officials and citizens. When Mahamaudgalyayana, now a Bhikshu, came to this city, the former bees whom he had to take across all bowed and welcomed him. Such is the power of his former vow."

Taking this situation to heart, we should always establish wholesome affinities by being kind to everyone. We should vow to lead all people and all creatures to Buddhahood. A vow is invisible, but living beings have the equivalent of a radio receiver in their minds, so they can tune in to it. A vow is not tangible or visible, but beings will instinctively know if you are good to them. You should resolve to rescue all living beings. Anyone who maintains this frame of mind will have affinities wherever he goes.

"I went to a certain place and no one came to my aid. Why was that?" someone may ask.

It is because you didn't develop any affinities with the people there in the past. Creating affinities is especially important for cultivators of the Way. So it is said, "If you haven't harvested the fruit of Bodhi, first create affinities with living beings." How? By being good to everyone. Why is this necessary? Living beings are the Buddha. Being good to them is simply being good to the Buddha. If you're not good to them, you're not being good to the Buddha.

Every thought ought to arise
for the sake of living beings.
Every good deed should be done
for the sake of all living beings.

One should use all one's strength to do good deeds. Such is the resolve of a Great Vehicle Bodhisattva. Don't be a Small Vehicle "self-ending" Arhat who only takes himself across to enlightenment and doesn't take others across, too.

If you can see all living beings as Buddhas, living beings will see you as a Buddha. If you see all living beings as demon kings, living beings will see you as a demon king. It's just like putting colored glasses on. If you put on green glasses, everything you see is green. If you wear red glasses, everyone turns red. Not only that, but the way you see others is the way they see you. That's why I said earlier that living beings have radio receivers in their minds, which let them tune into each other. Don't think the other person is not aware of your bad thoughts. Although he may not actually know what you are thinking, his self-nature senses it. Being good to people is *yang*-light. Not being good to people is *yin*-shadow.

The meanings and doctrines of the *Shurangama Sutra* are as deep as the sea. Although some people claim to have fathomed the depths of the ocean, actually its depth varies so much from place to place that it's impossible to say just how deep it is. The doctrines of the *Shurangama Sutra* are the same way. It's not easy to fathom them. Each person gains his or her own particular advantages from the Sutra. From person to person the advantages differ, but all come forth from the wisdom of the Sutra. Because the Sutra is deep, the wisdom we can obtain from it is great and the samadhi-power we gain is durable, and so it is called "The Ultimate Durability of all Things."

"If each of us obtains something from the Sutra, are its meanings and doctrines diminished?"

No. The meanings and doctrines are like water in the sea. When someone goes to the shore and dips out a bucketful of water, the amount of water left in the sea is still great. If another person takes some water for his purposes, the water in the sea is still abundant. The sea is inexhaustible and unending. The doctrines of this sutra are also inexhaustible and unending. When you become enlightened, the Sutra's doctrines are still as complete as they were before your enlightenment. You can extract any amount of wisdom, but the wisdom obtainable from the Sutra remains the same – it neither grows nor diminishes.

The Teaching Substance

A5 The expression of the teaching-substance.

All dharmas spoken by the Buddha have a teaching-substance. What is the substance of this sutra's teaching? It consists of words, sentences, writings, and sound. Manjushri Bodhisattva suggests to the Buddha that when the Thus-Come-One appears in the world the "true teaching-substance of this region resides only in sound." The region meant is the Saha world, our world of suffering. However, sound alone cannot be considered the substance of the teaching. Wind and water also make sounds, but they cannot be called the substance of the teaching.

More specifically, then, the substance of the teaching consists of sound, words, sentences, and writings. The sound is that of the Buddha's first speaking this Dharma. Once it was spoken, sound became words. And the words formed sentences, which were then written down. Once it was written down, the teaching became available. So the Sutra's teaching-substance is composed of sound, words, sentences, and writings.

The teaching-substance can be divided into Four Doors. The first is the Door of Accompanying Phenomena; in this case, the sound, words, sentences, and writings. The Shurangama's teaching-substance is based also on the door of Consciousness Only, and on the door of returning to the nature, which is not concerned with

appearances but returns directly to the nature. The Sutra also takes the door of Unobstructedness as its teaching-substance.

The Door of Consciousness Only discusses how the “three realms arise only from the mind and the myriad dharmas only from consciousness.” Shakyamuni Buddha contemplated the conditions to see which dharmas he should use to rescue beings. Then from within pure consciousness he spoke the Dharma to teach and transform living beings, and their consciousness gained the benefit. This is the door of consciousness-only, taking consciousness-only as the substance of its teaching.

The door of returning to the nature is completely interpenetrated without obstruction. In it the consciousness disappears and returns to the nature. Returning to the nature is also the substance of the teaching.

What is the Door of Non-Obstruction? The former doors include both phenomena and noumena, with the door of returning to the nature being noumena. When the Four Doors combine, phenomena and phenomena are non-obstructive. This non-obstruction, then – the perfect fusion and unobstructedness of all phenomena and of noumena – comprises this sutra’s teaching-substance.

Individuals Able to Receive the Teaching

A6 The identification of the appropriate individuals able to receive the teaching.

This refers to the living beings who are taught and transformed. To whom is the teaching of this sutra directed? The *Shurangama Sutra* causes sentient and insentient creatures to perfect all-wisdom at the same time. Both sentient and insentient beings can realize Buddhahood. Those who are taught specifically here are the Sound-Hearers, Ones Enlightened to Conditions, and those with something left to learn.

Sound-Hearers, Arhats, hear the Buddha's sound and awaken to the Way. They cultivate the Dharma-door of the Four Truths: suffering, accumulation, extinction, and the Way.

Ones Enlightened to Conditions are Pratyekabuddhas born at a time when there is a Buddha in the world. They cultivate the Twelve Causes and Conditions and awaken to the Way. When there is no Buddha in the world, Pratyekabuddhas are called Solitary Enlightened Ones. Solitary Enlightened Ones live deep in the mountains in the remote valleys where they hide away in caves. There they watch the myriad things between heaven and earth continually live and die. In the spring the hundred flowers open, in the autumn the yellow leaves fall. Watching these changes, they awaken to the Way.

Besides teaching the Sound-Hearers and The Ones Enlightened to Conditions, this sutra also teaches those with something left to learn, which in this case refers to the Bodhisattvas. The Buddha is the only one who has nothing left to learn. The Sutra also transforms the fixed-nature Sound-Hearers, those who do not wish to turn from the Small Vehicle toward the Great. A Sound-Hearer whose nature is flexible turns from the Small toward the Great and can pass from the position of Sound-Hearer through that of One Enlightened to Conditions on to become a Bodhisattva. Although Sound-Hearers, Ones Enlightened to Conditions, Bodhisattvas, and fixed-nature Sound-Hearers can be said to be the primary recipients of the Sutra's teaching, all living beings of the three realms – the desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm – are the primary recipients of the teaching. This sutra accords with all opportunities and takes everyone across without exception.

Similarities, Differences and Determination of Time

A7 The similarities and differences between the principle and its implications.

The principle is that which is held in honor. What the principle leads us back to is called its implication. The teaching of the Two Vehicles (Sound-Hearers and Pratyekabuddhas) is concerned primarily with cause and effect. This is a provisional Dharma. The Dharma the Buddha spoke includes both provisional and actual teaching. The provisional is temporary, the actual is everlasting. With the provisional Dharma, cause is principle, the entering is its implication. When true appearance is reached, the provisional becomes actual. When the actual is reached, one is said to have awakened and entered. Thus the awakening is the principle, the entering is its implication.

When Ananda, the protagonist of this sutra, ran into trouble, the Buddha rescued him and then taught him to turn from the Small toward the Great. That is the principle. Ananda’s arrival at the ultimate fruit is its implication. The principle and its implication thus penetrate to the Buddha-Way, and are the Way to Buddhahood, and are thus distinguished from the various Small Vehicle sutras which discuss only the Small Vehicle and cannot penetrate to the Buddha-position.

A8 The determination of the time.

This refers to the time when the Sutra was spoken. The Buddha spoke Dharma for forty-nine years. When he spoke the *Shurangama Sutra*, King Prasenajit was sixty-two years old, and since the Buddha and King Prasenajit were the same age, this would place the Sutra in the Prajna Period. But if we judge the Sutra by its teaching, it is classified as Vaipulya. Vaipulya, a Sanskrit word, means “Broadening Passages” and refers to the third period of Shakyamuni Buddha’s teaching, according to the Tyan Tai classification. Therefore the previous classification of this sutra as a Final Teaching, according to the Syan Shou classification, was correct.

CHAPTER 2

The History of the Transmission and Translation

A9 The history of the transmission and translation.

After the Great Tyan Tai Master Jr Yi read the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, he divided all sutras into Three Sections: the preface; the body, which embodies the principle and implication of the sutra; and the propagation, which is an exhortation at the end of the sutra that it be circulated throughout the world.

Later, when an Indian Dharma Master came to China and learned that Great Master Jr Yi had divided all sutras into these three parts, he was amazed, and exclaimed, "That is just the same way the sutras of India are divided! The *Shurangama Sutra*, for instance is divided in exactly the same way!" When Master Jr Yi heard of the existence of the *Shurangama Sutra*, which he had never seen, he was moved to bow to the west in the hope that he would one day see this Sutra. He bowed to the west every day for eighteen years, but in the end he never had the opportunity to see the Sutra. How superior must be the causes and conditions that allow us, who have never bowed to the Sutra, to be able to encounter it now, to read it, and to recite it!

Eventually, the King of India proclaimed the *Shurangama Sutra* a national treasure because it was one of the sutras that Nagarjuna Bodhisattva brought back from the Dragon Palace. After the proclamation, no one was permitted to take the Sutra out of the country. At that time, Dharma Master Paramiti was intent upon getting the Sutra out of India into other countries, especially China. He set out for China carrying a copy of the Sutra, only to be stopped at the border by customs officials who would not permit him to carry the Sutra across the border. Since he was unable to take the Sutra out of the country, he returned and tried to think of a way to get the Sutra out of the country. Finally, he thought of a way. He wrote out the Sutra in minute characters on extremely fine silk, rolled it up, and sealed it with wax. Then he cut open his arm and placed the small scroll inside his flesh. Next he applied medicines to the wound and waited for it to heal. Some people say he put the Sutra in his leg, but I think that since it would not have been respectful to place the text below the waist, he probably chose some fleshly place on the upper part of his body and put the Sutra there. When the wound healed, he again set out for China and passed through the border guards without incident since the sutra was well concealed. Eventually, he arrived in Canton Province where he happened to meet the Prime Minister Fang Yung, who invited him to reside at a temple in Canton while he translated the Sutra.

These were the difficulties encountered at the time the Sutra was translated. How fortunate for us that the Dharma Master was so determined to take the Sutra to China. From this account you can see how important this Sutra is.

The Translator

B1 The translator.

Sutra:

Translated during the T'ang Dynasty by Shramana Paramiti from Central India.

Commentary:

It was **during the Tang Dynasty**, after Empress Wu Tzai Tyan retired, in the first year of the Shen Lung Reign period that Shramana Paramiti translated this sutra from Sanskrit to Chinese. He accomplished the translation very quickly, so that he could get back to India before the customs officials at the border were punished for letting him slip through with the Sutra. Dharma Master Paramiti wanted to return to India and turn himself in so the guards would not be punished. After he finished his translation he went back to India, confessed to the king, and asked to receive whatever punishment the offense entailed.

This Dharma Master's merit with regard to this Sutra is extremely great. Since it is due to his efforts at the outset that we now have the opportunity to investigate this Sutra, we should first be thankful for this Shramana's meritorious work.

Shramana is a Sanskrit word which means "diligent and putting to rest", that is, diligently cultivating precepts, samadhi,

and wisdom, and putting to rest greed, hatred, and stupidity. The Buddha is also called a Shramana. Once in India, when the Buddha was in the world, the Bhikshu Ashvajit ("Master of Horses") was walking down the road carefully attired in his robes. His awesome deportment was so striking that upon seeing him Maudgalyayana was moved to say, "You are so majestic, your awesome manner so well perfected, that certainly you must have a master. Whom do you study with?"

Bhikshu Ashvajit said, "All dharmas arise from conditions, all dharmas cease because of conditions. The Buddha, the great Shramana, always speaks this way." When Maudgalyayana heard those words, he accompanied the monk back to the Jeta Grove in the Garden of Anathapindaka, bowed to the Buddha as his master, and left the home-life.

Each of us should study the conduct of a Shramana. In order to cultivate precepts, samadhi, and wisdom diligently like the Shramana, we should first take refuge with the Triple Jewel and then receive the Five Precepts: to refrain from killing, from stealing, from sexual misconduct, from lying, and from taking intoxicants. After receiving these precepts, we should actually put them into practice, which means we should never violate them. The Five Precepts are extremely important. Strict adherence to them will ensure rebirth in the realm of humans. If you cultivate the Five Precepts, you won't lose the opportunity to be born a person.

Someone may say, however, "I understand why one should not kill. After all, all living beings have the Buddha-nature, all can become Buddhas, so every living being's life should be spared. I also understand why stealing is not good and that it is important to refrain from indulging in sexual misconduct and lying, but why are intoxicants included within the Five Precepts? I've always enjoyed drinking and smoking. Everybody drinks. Everybody smokes. What's wrong with it? In fact, I'm seriously considering dropping my study of the Buddhadharma just because of this prohibition against intoxicants."

You should stop and think about it instead of just following the crowd. Others enjoy smoking and so you join them; others enjoy drinking and so you drink, too. You get caught up in such company and do the things they do until eventually you get the habit as well. Most people don't have great faults, but rather just slight faults and little problems. But just on account of these slight problems you would consider cutting short your study of the Buddhadharma. How stupid that would be! Do you want to know why there is a prohibition against wine? I'll tell you a true story to clarify this point.

There was once a man who liked to drink. He took the Five Precepts, but afterwards he didn't keep them. How did this happen? One day he thought, "Perhaps I'll have a little drink of wine." He took out a bottle and had a few swallows. He was accustomed to having something to eat with his drink, so he set the bottle down and went outside to look for something to eat. He noticed that his neighbor's chicken had strayed over into his yard. "Good," he thought, "it will make a good chaser," and he snatched up the pullet. At that point, he broke the precept against stealing. Once he'd stolen it, he had to kill it before he could eat it, and so he broke the precept against killing. Once the chicken was cooked he used it to chase down his wine, and soon he was roaring drunk, thus breaking once again the precept against the use of intoxicants. About that time, there was a knock at his door. It was the neighbor woman in search of her chicken. "I haven't seen it," he blurted out, thereby breaking the precept against lying. A second glance at the neighbor woman revealed her beauty to him, and, aroused by an overwhelming sexual desire, he raped her. Afterwards he was sued. Now all this came about because he wanted to drink. Just because he had a few drinks, he subsequently broke the other four precepts and got into a lot of trouble. Intoxicants cause one to become confused and scattered, and so they are the object of one of the Buddhist prohibitions. A person who is drunk lacks self-control. With no forewarning he can find himself suddenly in the heavens, suddenly on earth. He "mounts the clouds and drives the fog." He'll

do anything. Because it causes one to lose all inhibitions, it is included among the Five Precepts.

If you receive the Five Precepts and do not violate them, then you are protected by good Dharma-protecting spirits who are connected with each precept. If you break the precepts, the good spirits leave and no longer protect you. This is why receiving the precepts is extremely important in Buddhism.

"How does one receive the precepts?" someone may want to know.

Merely reading in a book that one must not kill, steal, commit acts of sexual misconduct, lie, or take intoxicants does not count as taking precepts. Nor is it possible to go before the Buddhas, light some incense, and make some incense-burns on your body and receive the precepts in that way. No, it is not done that way. If a layperson wishes to receive the Five Precepts, he must certainly find a high Sangha-member of great virtue to certify that he, the Sangha-member, has transmitted the substance of the precepts to the layperson. The Sangha-member tells the layperson that from now on he or she is one who has received the precepts. The merit gained by receiving and maintaining the precepts is inconceivably great and wonderful. But in order for it to be in accord with Dharma, one must go before a Sangha-member to seek and receive the precepts.

In addition to cultivating the precepts, a Shramana cultivates samadhi. There are many kinds of samadhi that could be discussed, but in general, if you are not moved by any external experience, you are in samadhi.

"How can one obtain samadhi?"

First you must become quiet by sitting in meditation and investigating Dhyana. The reason most people go restlessly back and forth, east today and west tomorrow, is that they have no samadhi. In the morning to the gate of *Chin*, in the evening to the court of *Chu*: they run all over, because they don't have any samadhi. To obtain samadhi, you must work hard, and as you do, you may have

many different experiences. But in the midst of these experiences, you should take care not to let them turn you around. That is samadhi. If an experience changes your state of mind, you have no samadhi. For instance, if you receive a letter containing bad news and it makes you worry, you have no samadhi. You don't pass the test. Or if you encounter some happy situation and you go chasing after it, you have no samadhi. If you are faced with a displeasing experience and you get angry, you also have no samadhi. You should be neither happy nor sad, neither exhilarated nor mournful. To have samadhi is to do things without getting emotional, but to use your Way mind instead.

By cultivating samadhi, you can open your wisdom. If you have no samadhi-power then you have no wisdom-power. Without the strength of wisdom, how can you study and practice the Buddhadharma?

"Where do samadhi-power and wisdom-power come from?" you ask.

They come from precepts. Every day you must protect and keep the precepts until eventually there comes to be a mutual response between the Dharma and your cultivation of it. When you have established this kind of relationship with the Dharma you can obtain the nourishment of Dharma-water.

A Shramana diligently cultivates precepts, samadhi, and wisdom and puts to rest greed, anger, and stupidity. These three poisons, greed, anger, and stupidity, are precisely the reason you have not realized Buddhahood. If you can put a stop to the three poisons you will quickly become Buddhas.

Greed is the feeling of "the more the better" whenever you encounter something you like. Anger is the feeling that arises when you encounter a situation that doesn't please you. Stupidity is the polluted thoughts of the stupid mind that cause you to go about things in a confused way. If you can simply put an end to those three poisons, you can be in mutual response with the Way. Then it is very easy to accomplish your work in the Way.

There are Four Kinds of Shramanas:

1. A Shramana victorious in the Way. He has cultivated and accomplished either Arhatship or Bodhisattvahood.

2. A Shramana who speaks of the Way. He propagates the Dharma for the benefit of living beings.

3. A Shramana who lives the Way. He maintains the precepts with purity and great vigor and is careful never to break them.

4. A Shramana who defiles the Way. He doesn't eat pure food and he breaks the precepts; he turns his back on them. Not only does he defile himself, but he defiles the Buddha's teaching. He makes a bad impression on people. When they see a person who has left the home life but does not keep the precepts, they lose their faith in the Buddhadharma. Since he causes others to lose faith, he is said to defile the Buddha's teaching.

Paramiti, the Shramana who translated the *Shurangama Sutra*, represents the first three kinds of Shramana: he is victorious in the Way, he speaks of the Way, and he lives the Way. Paramiti in Sanskrit means "Extreme Amount", indicating that his talent and his wisdom were both extremely ample and full. Dharma Master Paramiti translated the *Shurangama Sutra*, and as Director of Translation, he stood at the head of more than two hundred Dharma Masters who had assembled to work on the translation. The work was done at Jr Jr Monastery, a large monastery in the city of Canton. Because of the great merit and virtue involved in directing the translation of the Sutra, the translator and the history of transmission and translation are discussed as the ninth door, before the text itself is explained.

The Reviewer, Certifier and Editor

B2 The reviewer.

Sutra:

Reviewed by Shramana Meghashikara from Udyana.

Commentary:

Dharma Master Paramiti was assisted by a Shramana from Uddiyana, a place in India. Before it was converted to housing, Uddiyana had been the imperial flower garden, so in transliterating the word into Chinese, the character for carambola, a kind of flower, was used. Meghashika means “Able to Subdue”, which indicates that he could subdue afflictions, demon-obstacles, or anything of the sort. Having left Uddiyana for China, Meghashika revised the translation, paying particular attention to what expressions in Chinese would be used. He was one of the highest Dharma Masters to take part in the work.

B3 The certifier.

Sutra:

Certified by Shramana Hwai Di from Nan Lwo Monastery on Lwo Fu Mountain.

Often copies of the Sutra text do not list this Dharma Master’s name, but his name is listed in earlier editions and should be added to later ones if it has been omitted. **Lwo Fu Mountain** is a famous

mountain in Canton Province. **Nan Lwo Monastery** is the place where **Shramana Hwai Di** ("Cherishing Progress") dwelt. Probably when Hwai Di's Master gave him that name, it was in the hope that he would work hard and vigorously. The "Di" of his name means to "Progress", the meaning being that he should continually be vigorous in his cultivation, that he should not rest, that he should not be lazy. This Dharma Master was extremely well-educated. He concentrated on the study of the teachings of the sutras, so he was very clear about the doctrines contained in them. Because he also understood Sanskrit, he was the Dharma Master appointed to certify the translation. Since both Dharma Master Paramiti and Dharma Master Meghashika understood Sanskrit thoroughly, why did someone else from China certify the translation? Although these two Dharma Masters had mastered both Sanskrit and Chinese, they had just come to China, and it was to be feared that they did not completely understand Chinese, so someone from China was called upon to certify the translation. This was Dharma Master Hwai Di.

I haven't looked into why contemporary editions of the Sutra don't list Dharma Master Hwai Di, although former editions all do. But I wanted to mention him so that it would be known who certified the translation.

B4 The editor.

Sutra:

Edited by Bodhisattva-precepts Disciple Fang Yung of Ching He, former Censor of State, and concurrently Attendant and Minister, and Court Regulator.

Commentary:

The **Bodhisattva precepts** should be taken by both people who have left the home-life and laypeople. The Sutra that sets forth the Bodhisattva precepts, the *Brahma Net Sutra*, says, "Whether as king of a country or as a great official, when one is initiated into one's position, one should take the Bodhisattva precepts." Because

Fang Yung understood the Buddhadharma, he took the Buddha as his father and the Bodhisattvas as his brothers, and took the Ten Major and Forty-eight Minor Bodhisattva Precepts. Afterwards, he referred to himself as a **disciple**.

He received the Bodhisattva precepts and then he became the **Censor of State**, which means whenever the country was in error he reported it. He criticized. "Of State" indicates his official capacity within the government. The text says **former**, indicating that at the time he edited the *Shurangama Sutra* translation, he was no longer in that position. **Concurrently** means that he held two positions: **Attendant and Minister**. As attendant, he looked after the Emperor's affairs and carried out imperial commands. As minister, he was involved in the government of the country and in that capacity issued his own commands. His duty as **Court Regulator** was to make sure the affairs of court were in equilibrium.

His family name was Fang; his given name was Yung. Yung means "perfectly fused." He was from Ching He.

Edited by means he used his brush to write out the text. He polished the language, making it even more eloquent, so that the style and technical perfection of the writing is of unsurpassed excellence. Why? Official Fang Yung was a great writer, an extremely well-educated man. That he himself, with his own brush, polished this text makes the *Shurangama Sutra* text particularly fine. If you wish to study Chinese, you can memorize the *Shurangama Sutra*; it is a paragon of Chinese composition. Even many Chinese are unable to read and understand it.

Now that the first nine doors of explanation are complete, the specific explanation of the meaning of the text follows.

CHAPTER 3

The Testimony of Faith

A10 The specific explanation of the meaning of the text.
B1 The preface.
C1 The testimony of faith.
D1 An explanation of the six fulfillments.

Sutra:

Thus I have heard.

Commentary:

Thus expresses faith. Ananda, the Buddha's cousin and the foremost in learning of all his disciples, edited and compiled the sutras. At the beginning of each sutra he says, "Thus I have heard," indicating that the words to follow are the Buddha's words. "Thus" means "Dharma such as this, the ten volumes of the *Shurangama Sutra*, is what I, Ananda, have heard. I, Ananda, myself heard the Buddha speak this." Therefore, Dharma that is "thus" can be believed; Dharma that is not "thus" cannot be believed. "Thus," then, refers to the text of the Sutra.

"Thus" satisfies the Fulfillment of Faith. All sutras spoken by the Buddha begin with the Six Fulfillments: the Fulfillment of Faith; the Fulfillment of Hearing; the Fulfillment of Time; the

Fulfillment of a Host – one who speaks the Dharma; the Fulfillment of a Place; and, the Fulfillment of an Audience.

1. The Fulfillment of Faith.

"Why must one have faith?" someone may wonder.

Faith is the source of the Way
And the mother of merit and virtue
Because it nourishes all good dharmas.
Such is its great importance.

It is said,

The Buddhadharma is like a great sea;
Only through faith can one enter it.

There is no other way to enter the sea of Dharma except by faith. Only by means of faith can one "deeply enter the Sutra-Treasury and have wisdom like the sea." One should have faith that the *Shurangama Sutra* is extremely fine. Believe in the sutra. That is to have faith. That is what is meant by the Fulfillment of Faith.

2. The Fulfillment of Hearing.

Those with the Fulfillment of Faith still must come to listen to what is said. If you have only the Fulfillment of Faith, then when lecture time comes you may be off in the park or at a coffee house and miss the lecture entirely. That would be a case of there being no Realization of Hearing. But if instead you aren't out drinking coffee while sutras are being lectured – what is more, if you aren't even thinking about food though you've skipped dinner and are thus making absolutely certain that you hear the sutra – you have achieved the Fulfillment of Hearing. Since you have all come to listen and have brought about the Fulfillment of Faith with your sincerity, I will realize the Fulfillment of Hearing for you.

3. The Fulfillment of Time.

If you have faith and hearing, but you don't have the time, then there's no way to hear the sutra. There must be an appropriate time.

Usually, you are either going to school or going to work and have no time to come and listen to sutra lectures. But now we have found the time to assemble and investigate the Sutra.

4. The Fulfillment of a Host.

You must also have a host to speak the Dharma. If, for instance, you want to listen to sutras, you must find someone to lecture them for you. However, if you were to request one of your “do-it-yourself Dharma Masters” (laypeople who use this title even though they have not left the home-life in the orthodox tradition) to lecture, you would find that you might as well lecture yourself. You already understand what they lecture. Therefore you must find a host who can speak the Dharma. It was for this reason that you pulled me out of the grave. Basically I’m known as the “Monk in the Grave”, but you have brought me out to lecture sutras and speak Dharma for you.

“Who is the host of the Sutra?”

Shakyamuni Buddha spoke the *Shurangama Sutra*; he represents the Fulfillment of a Host.

5. The Fulfillment of a Place.

“Once there is a host to speak the Dharma, then everything is ready for Dharma to be spoken, right?” you ask.

No, you still need a place to lecture the sutras.

“What about the park? It’s big enough. We could go there for lectures.”

That might work for a day or two, but by the third day the authorities would prevent it. “This is a public park,” they would say. “You can’t occupy it like this.” So you have to find somewhere appropriate to bring about the Fulfillment of a Place.

6. The Fulfillment of an Audience.

Finally, there must be people who come to listen. If there’s no audience for the sutra lecture, you can go ahead and lecture to the tables and chairs, but can they listen? No, an audience is necessary.

For the *Shurangama Sutra*, the place is the Jeta Grove, in the Garden of the Benefactor of Orphans and the Solitary, at the city of Shravasti, where the Buddha dwelt with his disciples.

In this sutra, the audience is composed of the great Bhikshus and Bodhisattvas who came to listen.

When Ananda says, "Thus I have heard," the "I" refers to the "hypothetical self" of the Bodhisattva. There are Four Kinds of Self:

1. Ordinary people have an "attachment to the self" which comes from their attachment to the body.
2. Non-Buddhist religions speak of a "divine self". They maintain that there is a Godhead, or say that they themselves are God.
3. Bodhisattvas follow worldly custom and manifest a "hypothetical self".
4. The Buddhas have the "true self" of the Dharma-body.

The ordinary person is attached to his body and feels that it is his real self. Actually the body is but a temporary dwelling, like a hotel. You can live in a hotel for a while, but eventually you will have to move. You can't stay forever. Ordinary people do not understand this principle. They think, "My body is me," and they strive to feed it well and dress it beautifully. They look for pleasure to indulge it in. They want an elegant home and beautiful surroundings. They busy themselves dressing well, eating rich food, and living high – all only to help out their "stinking skin-bags".

The human body is merely a stinking skin-bag. You don't believe it? Take a look. Unclean matter oozes from your eyes. Your ears discharge wax, which is also unclean. Your nose is full of filthy mucus and your mouth is full of unclean saliva and phlegm. If you don't bathe for four days, your body begins to stink, and if you perspire, it becomes foul in just a day or two. Feces and urine are also filthy. Impurities are constantly being discharged from the nine bodily apertures of the eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, anus, and urethra

– they're all unclean. What is there to love about your body? You may dress it in finery; dab it with perfume; slave for it all day applying lipstick, rouge, and powder as some women are wont to do – all for the sake of the false shell of the body. No matter how good the food, it still turns into excrement. Decorating the body is just like decorating a toilet with beautiful material. No matter how elegant the toilet turns out, it is still a place to deposit filthy things. Would you say the insides of a human body are clean?

Tell me, what's so good about your body? When the time comes to die, it retains no sentiment for you. It doesn't say, "You've been so good to me, I'll live a few extra days and help you out." It can't do it. So what good is the body after all? Nonetheless, the ordinary person is attached to his body and takes it as himself. "This is MY body," he says. "You hit ME! I can't allow that! How dare you insult ME!"

Ultimately, who is that "me"? He doesn't even know who he is, and yet he says others are insulting him or hitting him. He hasn't recognized his original face and thinks the flesh body is "me". The spirit and the self-nature are the true self, but he has not found them. He can't see them. He doesn't even know enough to look for them. He just assumes he's doing the right thing by slaving for the sake of his body.

If your primary concern is to get the better half of things for yourself, you haven't figured out life right. Anyone like that won't be able to make things add up. He is busy for the sake of himself to the exclusion of all else. Therefore, a Bodhisattva is never busy for himself. He is busy for the sake of others. If people want his help, he will give it to them, regardless of the circumstances.

Non-Buddhist religions speak of a "divine self". "What is the self?" they say. "It is God." There are many varieties of this kind of self, but they will not be discussed at this time.

What is the "hypothetical self" of the Bodhisattva? Ananda says, "Thus I have heard." However, Ananda is enlightened; at the time he recalls the Buddha's words for us, he has already attained

Arhatship, and so he no longer has any "I" – any ego. In saying "I have heard," he is simply following worldly custom and assuming a hypothetical self in order to be comprehensible to ordinary people who have an attachment to the self.

Bodhisattvas do not have the characteristic of a self. They recognize the ordinary attachment to the self as false, and they seek the true self of one's own nature. It is from the false self that you can arrive at the true self, for only if you recognize the false can you find the true. If you don't recognize the false as false, how can you find the truth? Why are we now investigating the Buddhadharma? It is because we are searching for true principle. Why do we seek true principle? Because we know that everything in the world is false, and we want to find the truth within falsity. What is the true self of one's own nature that the Bodhisattva seeks? It is the Buddha. The Buddha is the true self. Before you have realized Buddhahood, your "I" is false. The Bodhisattva knows the self is false, but the ordinary person says, "You say the self is false, but as I see it, my body is excellent. It is strong, tall, well-proportioned and handsome. You may say it is false, but I think it is true." He can't see through it, and so he can't put it down. Unable to put it down, he cannot become truly independent.

The phrase "I have heard" indicates the Fulfillment of Hearing.

"Now, basically," you may say, "the ears hear. Why doesn't it say, 'Thus the ears heard,' instead of 'Thus I have heard.'?" Actually, the ears cannot hear. They are merely the organ of hearing. What hears is the nature, which is eternally present. It is the mind that heard. What it heard was the Dharma which is "thus".

"Which Dharma is 'thus'?" you ask.

It is the *Shurangama Sutra* that Dharma Master Paramiti wrote out on sheer silk, placed in an incision he made in his arm, carried to China, and translated into Chinese. Now it has come to America, where it has been translated into English. It is what Ananda himself heard the Buddha speak. It is what the Buddha has transmitted to

China. It is not something that Ananda as an individual put together and made. It is the Dharma the Buddha spoke.

All sutras that the Buddha spoke begin with the four words "Thus I have heard." There are four reasons for that.

1. To put the doubts of the assembly to rest.

After the Buddha had entered Nirvana, and it came time to compile the sutras, Ananda ascended the high seat to speak Dharma. He immediately manifested the appearance of entering samadhi and sat there for perhaps five minutes without speaking. Once he had entered samadhi, his appearance became identical with the Buddha's. He was endowed with the Thirty-two Marks and Eighty Subtle Characteristics of a Buddha; he emitted light and moved the earth. The great assembly of disciples immediately gave rise to three doubts:

a) Some thought that Shakyamuni Buddha had come back to life because they saw that Ananda had taken on the perfect features of the Buddha. The disciples had probably been thinking so much about the Buddha that their brains were a bit murky, and so they jumped to this conclusion.

b) Some thought that the reason Ananda now had such perfect features was that he, Ananda, had himself realized Buddhahood.

c) Some thought a Buddha had come from another region. "It isn't Shakyamuni Buddha, and Ananda hasn't become a Buddha," they thought. "Perhaps it is a Buddha from the north, south, east, or west, from one of the ten directions."

But as soon as Ananda said, "Thus I have heard," the three doubts of the assembly were suddenly resolved.

2. To honor the Buddha's instruction.

When the Buddha was about to enter Nirvana, he announced his intent to his disciples, and they began to cry. Ananda, who was the Buddha's cousin, cried hardest of them all. He sobbed and wept, probably until his tears washed his face clean. Finally the Venerable Aniruddha approached him and said, "Don't cry. You can't cry.

Since the Buddha is about to enter Nirvana, you should ask him what to do about things after he is gone."

"What things should I ask about?" Ananda said.

The Venerable Aniruddha replied, "In the future, the sutras will be compiled. You should ask what words to begin them with. Second," Aniruddha continued, "when the Buddha is in the world, we live with the Buddha. When the Buddha enters Nirvana where will we dwell? Ask the Buddha that. Third, we now rely on the Buddha as our teacher. After the Buddha enters Nirvana, whom should we take as our teacher? We have to have a teaching and transforming guide, a teaching host. Fourth, when the Buddha is in the world, he is able to discipline and subdue the bad-natured Bhikshus. After the Buddha enters Nirvana, how should they be dealt with? The proper thing for you to do is to go ask the Buddha these four questions."

Ananda agreed. He went to the Buddha and asked, "When the Buddha is in the world, we take the Buddha as our master. After the Buddha enters Nirvana, whom should we take as master?"

The Buddha answered, "Take the precepts as your master." Bhikshus and Bhikshunis should take the precepts as master.

"When the Buddha is in the world, we dwell with the Buddha," Ananda said. "When the Buddha enters Nirvana, where shall we dwell?"

"When the Buddha leaves the world, you should dwell in the Four Applications of Mindfulness," the Buddha answered. The Four Applications of Mindfulness are: contemplate the body as impure; contemplate feelings as suffering; contemplate thoughts as impermanent; and contemplate dharmas as being without self. If you contemplate the body as impure, you won't love the body. If you contemplate feelings as suffering, you can't be greedy for pleasure. If you know thoughts are impermanent, you won't become attached to the polluted thoughts that arise in your mind. The dharmas that are without a self are the Five Skandhas, or heaps: form, feeling, thinking, activity, and consciousness.

Third, Ananda said, "In the future when the sutras are compiled what words should we begin them with?"

The Buddha answered: "Use these four words: 'Thus I have heard.'" These words and the Six Fulfillments represent the completeness of the sutra's meaning and certify that the sutra was spoken by the Buddha.

"I have just one more question," said Ananda. "When the Buddha is in the world he can control the bad-natured Bhikshus. But when the Buddha enters Nirvana, what is to be done about them?"

The Buddha said, "As to the bad-natured Bhikshus, ignore them and they will go away. Pay no attention to them. Don't talk to them. Don't sit with them. In general, treat them as despicable; ignore them. If no one pays any attention to them, they won't be able to do anything, no matter how evil they may be."

Bad-natured Bhikshus are people who have left the home-life and who say and do unprincipled things. When the Buddha was in the world, there were six Bhikshus who were very bad. You shouldn't think that every person who leaves the home-life is good. There are also many unruly people among the Sangha. The Buddha instructs us to "ignore them and they will go away." Keep silent and pay no attention to them. In that way you can subdue them.

3. To resolve the assembly's disputes.

The Buddha had many disciples who were old cultivators – senior members of the assembly who had much more Way-virtue than Ananda. Ananda had just recently attained the fourth stage of Arhatship, while among the assembly were many who had long been fourth-stage Arhats. If Ananda had simply spoken the sutras, most of them would not have paid him due respect. But by saying "Thus I have heard," he made it clear that what they were about to hear was not a sutra spoken by Ananda himself, but rather a sutra he heard the Buddha speak. Therefore, no one could argue. Everyone knew that Ananda had the most excellent memory and could remember in their entirety all the sutras the Buddha had

spoken during his forty-nine years of teaching without getting them confused or mixed up in any way. Ananda was born on the day of the Buddha's enlightenment. He heard everything the Buddha taught during the last twenty-nine years of his life and remembered every single word of it.

"But how could he remember what the Buddha taught during the first twenty years?" someone may ask. "He wasn't even there to hear the teaching." Remember that Ananda was the Buddha's personal attendant and never left the Buddha's side. He used every opportunity to question the Buddha about the earlier teachings and in this way he learned all the Dharma the Buddha had spoken during those first twenty years. The Buddha's teaching was like a great river. Every drop of it flowed into the ocean of Ananda's mind. Not a single drop escaped. That is why it is said that everything the Buddha taught during all the forty-nine years – from his enlightenment to his Nirvana – was perfectly preserved in Ananda's memory. Thus, the disputes of the assembly were quelled.

4. To distinguish Buddhist sutras from the writings of other religions.

Non-Buddhist texts begin either with the word *O*, "existence," or the word *E*, "non-existence". They say that all phenomena are either existent or non-existent. But Buddhist sutras speak of true emptiness and wonderful existence, the doctrine of the Middle Way. They avoid the extreme doctrines of existence and non-existence, being and non-being. They begin with "Thus I have heard" to distinguish them from non-Buddhist texts.

Sutra:

At one time the Buddha dwelt at the city of Shravasti in the sublime abode of the Jeta Grove.

Commentary:

At one time refers to the time when the *Shurangama Sutra* was spoken. It was the appropriate time to speak the sutra.

"Why wasn't the specific year, month, day, and time recorded?" you ask.

Since the calendars of India and China did not coincide, there was no way to fix the time the *Shurangama Sutra* was spoken, so the simple phrase "At one time" was chosen. Of the Six Fulfillments, "At one time" brings about the Fulfillment of Time, and **the Buddha** as the host who speaks the Dharma is the Fulfillment of a Host.

If you want to become a Buddha, you must learn what a Buddha is like.

"What is a Buddha like?"

A Buddha is happy from morning to night. He doesn't worry. He doesn't give rise to afflictions. He sees all living beings as Buddhas, and so he himself has realized Buddhahood. If you can see all living beings as Buddhas, you too are a Buddha.

"What does the word Buddha mean?"

The word Buddha means "enlightened". The Buddha has perfected the Three Kinds of Enlightenment: enlightenment of self, enlightenment of others, and the perfection of enlightenment and practice. This has been explained above.

In this sutra the terms for the Three Kinds of Enlightenment are called basic enlightenment, initial enlightenment, and ultimate enlightenment, but these are simply different names for the enlightenment of self, the enlightenment of others, and the perfection of enlightenment and practice. In Buddhist sutras there are many places where the names vary but the meaning is the same. You should not fail to recognize something just because the name is different. If someone changes his name, you won't know he is being referred to when someone mentions him by his new name, but when you meet him face to face, you'll say, "Oh, it's you!" The Three Kinds of Enlightenment of the Buddha are the same way. If you haven't investigated the Buddhadharma deeply, then you won't know what basic enlightenment, initial enlightenment, and ultimate

enlightenment are, but if you have studied the Buddhadharma you know that they are the same as the Three Enlightenments.

That is a general explanation of the word Buddha. If the word Buddha were discussed in detail, it could not be completely explained in three years, let alone three months. Now I have no alternative but to explain it for three minutes and let it go at that. That is because Americans like speed. They want everything to be done fast. So now in lecturing the Sutra I will do it fast, like a rocket going to the moon. In a rocket, Zut! – you're there. Although basically I hold to the old ways, I can't use antiquated methods.

The Buddha **dwelt at the City of Shravasti**. Shravasti, a Sanskrit word, was the name of the capital city in which King Prasenajit lived. The Buddha taught and transformed many living beings there while he dwelt in the sublime abode of the Jeta Grove; which was near the city. Shravasti was different from other cities, in that it was unusually full of pleasures involving the five objects of desire: forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and objects of touch. All were extremely fine. As to forms, there were probably many beautiful women, and the city itself was undoubtedly very colorful. As to sounds, the music was probably extremely beautiful. As to smells, there was Indian curry, for instance, which we also have in this country and which can be smelled for quite a distance when it is cooking. As to flavors, there was ghee, a delicious milk product. As to objects of touch, they probably had the finest silks – the epitome of elegance – in Shravasti.

The city had abundance and affluence, and the people had the virtues of education and freedom; thus Shravasti is interpreted as meaning "Abundance and Virtue". The people were well-educated, well-read, and experienced. They were endowed with intelligence, penetrating insight, and scholarship. They were also a free people; they were not bound by others.

Once there was a Dharma Master who went to seek instruction from an elder Dharma Master. When he arrived, he put on his robe

and sash, opened his kneeling cloth, knelt before the elder Dharma Master, and asked for instruction.

"What instruction do you want from me?" asked the old Master.

"I am seeking freedom," came the reply.

"Who's binding you up?" the old Master asked.

As soon as he heard the question, the young Dharma Master realized that no one was binding him, and he immediately became enlightened. "I am already free," he realized. "What am I doing seeking further freedom?" That realization brought about his enlightenment.

"If I were to seek instruction in how to obtain freedom, and someone were to tell me that I'm not bound up, would I become enlightened?" you ask.

That's different. Your time has not yet arrived. Your potential has not yet matured. When it does, one sentence will cause you to awaken, to connect suddenly and penetrate through to enlightenment.

The people of Shravasti were free, which means that their cultivation made it easy for them to realize the Way. Because Shravasti was so well-endowed with abundance and virtue, the Buddha dwelt there.

The sublime abode of the Jeta Grove is the "Jeta Grove in the Garden of the Benefactor of Orphans and the Solitary" mentioned at the beginning of the *Vajra Sutra*.

In Shravasti there lived a great elder named Sudatta, who was endowed with many blessings. No one knew the extent of his wealth. One day a friend said to Sudatta, "The Buddha is at such-and-such a place speaking Dharma." The moment Sudatta heard the word "Buddha", his hair stood on end and he was beside himself.

"I want to go see the Buddha right now," he said; "Immediately!" Because of his wish to see the Buddha, the Buddha shone his light on Sudatta, although he was a good distance away. It was

the middle of the night, but because the Buddha's light was shining on him, Sudatta thought it was already dawn, so he arose and set out to see the Buddha. Since it was actually the middle of the night, the city gates were still locked, but by means of the power of the Buddha's spiritual penetrations, the gates opened of themselves when Sudatta arrived and closed behind him again as he went out. He reached his destination, saw the Buddha, and, hearing the Buddha speak Dharma, was inexpressibly happy. Then he asked the Buddha, "You have so many disciples; where do they live?"

At that time there wasn't any sublime abode in the Jeta Grove. The Buddha said, "I haven't any permanent residence."

"I will build you a monastery!" said the elder. "I will make a place for you." Since he was wealthy, he could speak with authority. "As soon as I return I will find a place and begin construction."

When he got back to Shravasti he looked everywhere until he eventually found Prince Jeta's garden, which was about a mile and a half outside the city. He saw that the garden was the most appropriate place to give the Buddha. But it belonged to the Prince, so he went to negotiate.

"Why do you want to buy my garden?" Prince Jeta asked.

"I'm going to build a place to invite the Buddha to live in," replied the elder.

"All right," Prince Jeta said in jest, "cover the grounds of the garden completely with gold coins, and I will sell it to you."

It never occurred to the prince that Sudatta would actually do it. Who would have guessed that Sudatta would return and take all the gold coins from the family storehouses to the gardens to be laid out on the grounds?

"I was just kidding!" cried the prince when he saw the gold-laden ground. How could I sell you my garden? You shouldn't have taken me seriously!"

"You are a prince now," replied the elder Sudatta. "In the future you will be the king. A king does not speak in jest. You can't joke with me. Whatever you say should be just as it is. You can't refuse to sell."

When the prince heard that, there was nothing he could do. "Very well," he said. "You have covered the ground with gold coins, but you didn't cover the trees. Here's what we will do. We will divide it. The ground you covered is yours, but the trees are mine. However, I don't want them for myself. I'll make a gift of them so you can provide a place for the Buddha."

The elder Sudatta had no choice but to accept Prince Jeta's conditions. So the place was named the Jeta Grove in the Garden of "the Benefactor of Orphans and the Solitary." Sudatta was also known as Anathapindaka, "the Benefactor of Orphans and the Solitary," because he took pleasure in helping widows, widowers, orphans, and the solitary, that is elderly couples who had no children. His virtuous deeds earned him a title awarded to elders of great virtue.

"How is Prince Jeta's name explained?"

Prince Jeta was born on the day his father, King Prasenajit, returned victorious from a battle with a neighboring country, so the child was given the name Jeta, "Victorious in War," by his father, the king.

This is the history of the "sublime abode of the Jeta Grove." Sudatta invested large additional sums of money in the construction of the sublime abode.

D2 A broad explanation of the fulfillment of an audience.
E1 Sound-hearers.
F1 Listing their number.

Sutra:

With a gathering of great bhikshus, twelve hundred fifty in all.

Commentary:

The **gathering** of great Bhikshus, together with the great Arhats and the Bodhisattvas of the ten directions mentioned below, bring about the Fulfillment of an Audience.

The sutras spoken by the Buddha are not confused or disconnected. They weren't spoken casually. Every sutra has its Six Fulfillments at the beginning, because only when these six are brought about can a Dharma assembly be established and the Dharma be spoken.

Great Bhikshus are different from small Bhikshus. Great Bhikshus are at the stage in their cultivation where they are just about to attain enlightenment. "Bhikshu" is a Sanskrit word that has three meanings: mendicant, frightener of Mara, and destroyer of evil.

A Bhikshu is a mendicant who takes his bowl out into the streets to collect alms. He does not go only to the wealthy and avoid the poor, or vice-versa. A Bhikshu must practice equality in his alms-rounds, which means he must go strictly from door to door, and to no more than seven houses. So it is said, "One should not avoid the poor and go to the rich, nor ignore the lowly and seek out the honorable."

When someone ascends the precept platform to receive the Bhikshu Precepts, he faces Three Masters and Seven Certifiers. The Three Masters are the Precept Transmitter, the Karmadana, and the Teaching Transmitter. The Seven Certifiers act as guarantors that, as a monk, the Bhikshu will not violate the rules of pure eating or break the Precepts. When the Precepts are transmitted, the Karmadana asks, "Have you already resolved to attain Bodhi?"

The answer is, "I have already resolved to attain Bodhi."

He also says, "Are you a great hero?"

The answer to be given by the preceptee is, "Yes, I am a great hero." When the questions have been answered in this way, an earth-traveling rakshasa ghost, a being of our world who records

good and evil, says, “Now the Buddha’s retinue has increased by one, and Mara’s retinue has decreased by one.” The earth-traveling rakshasa transmits this news to a space-traveling yaksha ghost, who in turn transmits the news through space to the Sixth Desire Heaven, where Mara dwells. When Mara, who is king of the heavenly demons, hears the news, he is terrified. That is why the second meaning of Bhikshu is frightener of Mara.

A Bhikshu is also a destroyer of evil, because he breaks up the evils of ignorance and afflictions.

Since the word Bhikshu has three meanings, it falls in the category of “terms not translated because they contain many meanings”, and, according to the rules of translation as set down by Dharma Master Sywan Dzang during the Tang Dynasty in China, it is left in Sanskrit.

Actually, there were twelve hundred fifty-five great Bhikshus in the Jeta Grove assembly, but the number is rounded off to **twelve hundred fifty in all**. These disciples comprised the Buddha’s constant following. Formerly most of them had adhered to non-Buddhist paths, but, upon receiving the Buddha’s teaching, they were transformed. Moved by the Buddha’s deep kindness, they constantly dwelt with him thereafter.

Of the twelve hundred fifty, the Buddha first took across Ajnatakaundinya and the other four of the five Bhikshus in the Deer Park. Next he converted the three Kashyapa brothers, who had been fire-worshipers. When they took refuge with the Buddha, they brought their thousand disciples along with them to also take refuge. That makes one thousand five disciples. Maudgalyayana and Shariputra each had a hundred disciples: they brought the total to one thousand two hundred and five. Then Yashas, the son of an elder, and his disciples took refuge for a total of fifty people, which makes one thousand two hundred fifty-five disciples in all.

What is meant by a “gathering”? One person cannot be called a gathering, nor can two, nor three. It takes four or more to form an

assembly. In this case, however, the gathering consisted of more than twelve hundred fifty.

This is how Ajnatakaundinya became the first of Shakyamuni Buddha's disciples. In a former life, the Buddha was a patient immortal cultivating the Way in the mountains. He cultivated the practice of patience in the face of insult. One day the King of Kalinga went to the mountain on a hunting expedition, bringing with him a party of concubines, palace girls, ministers, and officials. While the king hunted, the concubines went for a stroll on the mountain and encountered the old Bhikshu, the patient immortal. The concubines, who rarely left the palace, had never before seen a person with such a long beard and such hair as his. Although he was a cultivator, the concubines thought he was a freak, and so they crept closer and asked him, "What are you doing?"

"I am working at cultivating the Way. I am practicing the Buddhadharma," replied the old cultivator. The concubines had never heard of the Buddhadharma or even of the Buddha and were completely puzzled by his answer. Their curiosity got the better of them, and each one had to come closer for a peek at the old cultivator. They crowded around him in a circle.

By then the King of Kalinga had returned from his hunting, only to find that his beautiful concubines had disappeared. He went looking for them and found them standing in a circle around a long-haired, bearded man. The sight ignited the king's jealousy. He thought to himself, "This man has seduced my beautiful women! They won't pay any attention to me, and yet he's managed to seduce them." Aloud he asked, "What are you doing?"

"I am cultivating patience," replied the old cultivator.

"What do you mean by patience?"

"Patience means that no matter what you do to me, no matter how impolite you are to me, no matter how badly you treat me, I can bear it."

"Really?" said the King of Kalinga. "Is that truly the way you are? I don't believe you can do it. If you truly have patience, why did you seduce my women? Now that they have become so involved with you and have fallen in love with you, in the future they will certainly run away from the palace."

"No, I wouldn't seduce your women. I have been speaking Dharma for them, teaching them to be patient."

"Patient!" spit back the king. "So you can be patient, eh? All right, I'll try you out. Let's see if you can be patient..." and he chopped off the old cultivator's ear. "Can you bear it?" he shouted. "Are you angry?"

"I'm not angry," replied the old cultivator.

Next the king sliced off the cultivator's nose. "Are you angry?" he asked. "Are your afflictions welling up? Don't you hate me?"

"I haven't given rise to affliction," replied the old cultivator, "nor am I angry with you."

"Is that true? Are you really not angry?" screamed the king. "Very well, I'll cut off your hand," which he did in one blow. "You still don't hate me?"

The old cultivator, this previous incarnation of Shakyamuni Buddha, said to the King of Kalinga, "I don't hate you."

"Then I will cut off the other hand!" and the king brought his sword down once again on the old cultivator. "Are you angry?"

"I'm still not angry," replied the old cultivator.

"Ah, you don't know truth from falsehood. Here, I'll cut off your foot. Now, are you angry?"

"I'm not angry."

The king cut off his other foot, which meant that he had severed all four of the old cultivator's limbs. "You still don't hate me?" he asked.

The old cultivator replied, "I still don't hate you."

“You’re lying!” cried the king. “There isn’t a person in the world who wouldn’t get angry upon having all four limbs sliced off his body. I don’t believe you really can be this way.”

At that time the old cultivator made a vow. “If I have not given rise to any anger,” he told the king, “then my four limbs will grow back and my body will be whole once more. But if I have gotten angry, my hands and feet won’t rejoin my body, and my nose and ear won’t grow back.” As soon as he finished speaking, his hands, feet, ear, and nose, which had been completely severed, grew back again.

“What kind of weird monster are you?” the King of Kalinga cried. “What kind of freak can make his hands and feet grow back on his body? A demon!” the king concluded, addressing his party of ministers and concubines. But as soon as these thoughts arose, the Dharma protectors and beneficent gods let loose a hail-storm that came beating down on the king.

Then the old cultivator made another vow. “Please, Dharma protectors and good spirits, don’t punish him. I forgive him,” he said. Then he told the king, “In the future, when I realize Buddhahood, I will take you across to Buddhahood first.” As a result of that vow, when Shakyamuni Buddha realized Buddhahood, the first person he took across was Ajnatakaundinya, who was none other than the former King of Kalinga.

Upon realizing Buddhahood, the power of his vow led him immediately to the Deer Park to save the five Bhikshus, of whom the first was Ajnatakaundinya. When someone makes a vow, a connection is created. Therefore you should make vows to be good to people and to rescue them, and you should be careful not to make vows to kill people. If you vow to kill people, in the future, people will vow to kill you, and there will be no end to the cycle of killing. If you make vows to take living beings across to Buddhahood, then we can all realize Buddhahood together, and everyone will obtain the bliss of the Eternally Still, Bright, Pure Land. Be good to people, even if they are not good to you. We should have the kind

of vitality that the patient immortal had when, far from getting angry, he vowed to save his attacker who was cutting off his limbs. Students of the Buddhadharma should imitate this spirit of magnanimity.

F2 Praising their virtues.

Sutra:

All were great Arhats without outflows, disciples of the Buddha, dwellers and maintainers. They had fully transcended all existence, and were able to travel everywhere, and to accomplish the awesome deportment.

Commentary:

These great Bhikshus were not just great Bhikshus; they were Bodhisattvas appearing in the bodies of Bhikshus. So it is said, "Inwardly they secretly practiced the Bodhisattva-conduct. Outwardly, they appeared in the bodies of Sound-Hearers." Though all were Bodhisattvas at heart, though the fundamental nature of the Great Vehicle was contained in their hearts, they outwardly practiced the dharmas of the Small Vehicle and appeared as **great Arhats without outflows**. A person who has attained the first fruition of enlightenment is called a "small" Arhat, while one who has attained the fourth fruition is called a "great" Arhat. However, if an Arhat who has attained the fourth fruition does not continue to progress in his investigation, does not advance in his cultivation, he is called a "fixed-nature Sound-Hearer"; he remains fixed on that level. He obtains a little and is satisfied. Although what he has is not much, he thinks it is sufficient and does not consider making any further progress. If he continues to advance in his cultivation, he can attain the position of a Bodhisattva. This was the case with the great Arhats of the Shurangama assembly.

As explained above, "Arhat" is a Sanskrit word with three meanings: worthy of offerings, without birth, and killer of thieves. While Bhikshus can receive the offerings only of people, small Arhats are worthy of the offerings of people and gods, such as kings

of countries or of heavens. Great Arhats are worthy of receiving the offerings not only of people and gods, but also of those who have transcended the world – that is of those who have reached states beyond the Six Desire Heavens. Great Arhats can receive the offerings of Bodhisattvas, because they have cut off afflictions beyond the triple realm, whereas small Arhats have cut off only the afflictions within the triple realm. So great Arhats can be said to be Bodhisattvas. Although they manifest as Bhikshus and do not practice the Bodhisattva-Way, within their hearts they have the magnanimity of Bodhisattvas, and they can gradually attain the level of Bodhisattvahood. In past lives, they had already realized Buddhahood. Wishing to help Shakyamuni Buddha propagate the Buddhadharma, they appeared in the bodies of Bhikshus to act as Arhats. Basically, these Arhats are great Bodhisattvas.

An Arhat also is said to be without outflows. This means he has already attained the state of being patient with the non-production of dharmas. An Arhat is also called a “killer of thieves”, because he has completely killed the thieves of ignorance.

People who have attained the fruition of the Way have no outflows; no outflows of desire, no outflows of existence, and no outflows of ignorance. Being “without outflows”, they do not fall into the three realms: the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the formless realm. We people all now dwell in the realm of desire; although we live on earth, we are actually a part of the heavens of the desire-realm. It is called the desire-realm because the people in it have thoughts of desire and longing, which they are unable to stop. There are two kinds of desire: the desire for material objects and the desire for sex. By the desire for material objects is meant greed for all enjoyable things. For instance, if you don’t have a house, you want to buy a house. Once you have a house, you think about buying a better one. That is the desire for houses. Or perhaps you want a good car. At first, perhaps you buy a beat-up car, but when you drive it around, people look down on you so you decide to buy a better car, but you still do not invest in the latest model. Once you compare your car to the newest model, however, you feel

your present car isn't good enough, so you invest in a new one. That is the desire for cars. Eventually your desire reaches the point that once you have the latest model car, you decide to buy an airplane. Once you have an airplane, you decide to invest in ships. The desire for material objects never ends. You never say, "I've had enough; I'm satisfied. I don't want any more. I'm not greedy for any more things."

"Where does desire come from?"

It comes from ignorance.

Desire for sex is something you would probably understand without my speaking about it. It refers to being greedy for beauty. It, too, cannot be satisfied. One wife is not sufficient; he has to have two. Then two are not enough; he needs three. Some men keep ten or twenty wives. How do you suppose one person can respond to so many? Emperors often had several hundred or several thousand women gathered in the palace. Wouldn't you say that was extremely unfair? Now in democratic countries men are allowed only one wife. The practice of polygamy is prohibited, but there are still many people who sneak out and become involved in illicit affairs. Driven by their desire for sex, many men and women sneak out to carry on wanton relationships; they do not follow the rules.

Besides the outflow of desire there is the outflow of existence. This outflow occurs in the heavens of the form-realm, which are beyond desire. By existence is meant the existence of everything and anything. People who are greedy for existence and cannot maintain control have outflows whenever there is a lot of something.

The greatest of the three kinds of outflows is the outflow of ignorance; ignorance is the basic root of affliction. With the outflow of ignorance, the outflows of existence and of desire arise. If ignorance disappears the other two are also cut off.

Disciples of the Buddha. The Chinese word for disciple can also mean son, but here it refers not to Rahula, the Buddha's son,

but to the great Bhikshus, the great Arhats spoken about above. The *Brahma Net Sutra* says:

> *When living beings receive the Buddha's precepts,*
> *They enter the Buddha's position,*
> *When their state is identical to great enlightenment,*
> *They are truly the Buddha's disciples.*

Living beings who have received the Buddha's precepts have the qualifications necessary to realize Buddhahood. When their enlightenment comes, they are called disciples of the Buddha.

The *Dharma Flower Sutra* says,

> *Because they come forth from the Buddha's mouth and are born by transformation from the Dharma, they are called disciples of the Buddha.*

"What does it mean to be born by transformation from the Buddha's mouth?" you ask.

As a result of being taught and transformed by the Buddha, they became enlightened and thus were born from the Buddhadharma. For example, the day you took refuge with the Triple Jewel was your new birthday, the beginning of a new life. Those of you who have taken refuge with the Triple Jewel are the Buddha's disciples.

As **dwellers** they dwelt within the Buddhadharma, and as **maintainers** they relied on the Buddhadharma in their cultivation. Specifically, in terms of the *Shurangama Sutra*, they dwelt in the Treasury of the Tathagata and maintained the Ultimately Firm Samadhi. You should protect and maintain the Firm Samadhi and not allow it to become scattered or lost.

The term "Abbot,"[4] one who heads a monastery, literally refers to someone who dwelt in and maintained the Buddhadharma, because it is his work to cause the Buddhadharma to continue and not to be cut off, to hand it down and to allow it to spread; to

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4. *chu ch'ih*, 住持

perpetuate the Buddha's wisdom-life, like the great Arhats of the Shurangama Assembly.

The Arhats **had fully transcended all existence**, that is, the twenty-five realms of existence found in the triple realm, **and were able to travel everywhere, and to accomplish the awesome deportment**. They had the ability to live in any land in the ten directions, not just in our Saha world. Because they were Arhats and had spiritual penetrations and transformations, they could fly or walk as they pleased.

"If they could go anywhere, why haven't I ever seen any in America?" you may ask.

Even if they had come to America you wouldn't have been able to see them or know of it, because at the time the Buddha was in the world you hadn't even been born yet!

They were able **to perfect the awesome deportment** wherever they went; they had an awesomeness that people feared and a deportment that people wished to imitate. They were deserving of respect because they differed from the ordinary in every way, and they were respected by everyone they met. "Ah, that person is truly fine, truly deserving of respect and admiration!" Wherever the Great Bhikshus went, they did not look at improper things. They wouldn't peer around like someone intent upon stealing something. Their eyes constantly regarded their noses, their noses regarded their mouths, and their mouths regarded their hearts. When they walked, their gaze did not extend beyond three feet in front of them. In this way they returned the light to illumine within. So awesome was their bearing that they never indulged in rowdiness or horseplay, never giggled or joked. They were very refined and stern.

Sutra:

They followed the Buddha in turning the wheel and were wonderfully worthy of the bequest. Stern and pure in the Vinaya, they were great exemplars in the three realms. Their limitless response-bodies took living beings across and

liberated them, pulling out and rescuing those of the future so they could transcend all the bonds of dust.

Commentary:

These four sentences praise four kinds of admirable virtues that characterize the practice of the Arhats. The first sentence praises the Arhat's virtue of wisdom; the second praises the maintenance of the precepts and rules; the third praises the virtue of kindness; and the fourth, the virtue of compassion.

They followed the Buddha in turning the wheel. The Arhats constantly followed the Buddha, not just to serve the Buddha or provide for him; not just to offer the Buddha a towel or to bring the Buddha a cup of tea in order to be filial to the Buddha. It's not simply that they attended upon the Buddha. They helped him turn the Wheel. This does not refer to the turning wheel of the six paths, but rather to the great Dharma-Wheel.

"Why is it called a wheel?" you ask.

For one thing, a wheel can grind; a mill-wheel grinds rice and other grains. The Dharma-Wheel grinds up all the "dead-end sects and externalist paths" and pulverizes and destroys their erroneous and improper teachings.

A wheel also transports. Just as a boat transports cargo from Europe to America, so, too, the turning Dharma-Wheel transports living beings from this shore of birth and death to the other shore of Nirvana. The speaking of Dharma is like a ship that transports living beings from this shore of birth and death to the other shore of Nirvana. The speaking of Dharma is like a ship that transports people from one place to another.

They **were wonderfully worthy of the bequest**. They had all attained inconceivable states and so were wonderfully worthy. "Worthy" means that, because of the inconceivable states they had accomplished, they were capable of receiving and had the authority to receive the Buddha's final bequest, that is, the last instructions he gave everyone about what to do after his Nirvana. It is like an

ordinary family; when the father is about to die, he tells his sons and daughters what they should do in the future, how they should cultivate and handle matters. The Buddha also commands his disciples, telling them, “You should work in this way; you should go to that place and turn the Dharma-Wheel to teach and transform living beings.” That is called the bequest.

The great Bhikshus were worthy to receive the Buddha’s final instructions because they all had an inconceivable wisdom and could turn the Dharma-Wheel to benefit themselves and benefit others. This sentence praises the wisdom that enabled them to teach and transform other people and cause them also to have wisdom. This sentence praises the Arhat’s virtue of wisdom.

Stern and pure in the Vinaya, they were great exemplars in the three realms. “Stern” means severe in demeanor, exacting, and not the least bit haphazard. It means they were honorable and awesome; they were forbidding, so that when you were in their presence you dared not laugh or be rambunctious or disobedient. You also did not dare let your eyes wander around, because the great Arhats were so severe.

They were clear and pure because they had ended evil and had rid themselves of all bad habits. “Pure” can also mean that they had severed the delusions arising from views, the delusions arising from thoughts, and the myriad subtle delusions like dust and sand, and it means the were also without ignorance. Pure and clear, clear and pure, they had no filth left; they were devoid of evil.

“How can one become devoid of evil?” you wonder.

“Cut off evil,” it is said. However, the purity referred to here is free even of the concept of cutting off evil. If you still remember how you cut off evil, then you are not yet pure. If you remember that on such and such a day you cut off a certain amount of evil, and at such and such a time you also cut off a certain amount of evil, then you are not yet pure. Why? You still have dirty things in your mind. If you are pure, all these things are forgotten. When they are absolutely non-existent, you have attained purity.

"Vinaya" is a Sanskrit word which means "good healing". It is fully able to cure your faults. "Stern and pure in the Vinaya" means the great Arhats, through actual practice, had perfected and attained the Dharma which cures faults.

"They were great exemplars," unsurpassable standards in the three realms: the desire realm, the realm of form, and the formless realm. They were guides and masters of gods and people. And so this sentence praises the great Arhats' virtue of maintaining the precepts.

Their limitless response-bodies took living beings across and liberated them. "Response-bodies" are also called transformation-bodies. Originally the great Arhats didn't have response-bodies, but they created them by transformation in infinite amounts. There might be three thousand of them, then at another time five thousand, or ten thousand, a hundred thousand, a million, a billion. Why are response-bodies brought forth? Is it so that the great Arhats can go about displaying spiritual penetrations to let people know that they have them? No. The great Arhats create the response-bodies to teach and transform living beings who need to be taken across to enlightenment. For living beings who should be taken across by a Buddha, they manifest the body of a Buddha and speak Dharma for their sake. For living beings who should be taken across by a Pratyekabuddha, or by a Brahma king or by Shakra, or by a Bhikshu or a Bhikshuni, they manifest those response-bodies to take those beings across. Like Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva, who is extremely kind to those with whom he has karmic ties, and greatly compassionate toward those who are at one with him, great Arhats manifest numberless response-bodies to cause beings to leave suffering and to obtain bliss. They enable them to be at peace and to experience the bliss of obtaining what they like. Kindness can bestow happiness, and the great Arhats were extremely kind and compassionate.

Pulling out and rescuing those of the future so they could transcend all the bonds of dust. What is meant by "extricating"?

Say, for example, that someone gets both feet stuck in the mud so that each time he pulls one foot out, the other foot gets stuck deeper, until eventually he can't take another step. Then you extend your hand and pull him out of the mud. Or someone may be caught in flood waters, unable to get out until you go in and rescue him. The great Arhats extricate and rescue "those of the future", and so we now have hope, because we are those of the future. If you can but believe the Dharma the Arhats speak for you to hear, you can be rescued and crossed over. You and I are numbered among those of the future.

Why can't you fly now? Why can't you go into empty space? You have too many burden, that's why. They weigh you down and make your body very heavy. That is to speak of the earth's gravitational pull. But if you are free of burdens, then the force of gravity does not bind you, and you can gain your independence. The transient dust burdens us. It is because your burdens pull at you and cling to your clothing that you can no longer fly, although originally you could. However, the great Arhats can think of ways to enable all living beings to transcend their troublesome burdens so they can no longer be tied down, so the earth's gravitational force can no longer hold them. Once free, you can drift off into space like a balloon, you can go wherever you wish – to the moon, to the stars. It's not easy to travel this way. This kind of travel is very convenient. There's no need to buy a plane ticket. Wherever you want to go, you can just go there. If you can reach that level, you are said to have transcended your troublesome burdens.

Just as the previous sentence praises the great Arhats' virtue of kindness, which brings happiness, this last sentence praises their virtue of compassion, which can rescue living beings from their distress.

F3 Listing the names of the leaders.

Sutra:

The names of the leaders were: the greatly wise Shariputra, Mahamaudgalyayana, Mahakaushthila, Purnamaitreyaniputra, Subhuti, Upanishad, and others.

Commentary:

Shariputra's name may be translated in three ways: "Son of the Body", because his mother's body was extremely beautiful; "Son of the Pelican", because his mother's eyes were as beautiful as a pelican's; and "Son of Jewels", because his mother's eyes shone like jewels, and Shariputra's eyes were like his mother's. Shariputra was foremost in wisdom among the Sound-Hearers. In fact, **greatly wise** Shariputra's wisdom was evident even before he was born. **Mahakaushthila**, Shariputra's uncle used to debate with his sister, Sharika. He never had any trouble defeating her until she became pregnant with Shariputra, and then she outwitted him every time. Realizing that his sister's newly acquired skill in debate must be due to the presence of an exceptional child in her womb, Mahakaushtila set out to school himself in all the dharmas of all the non-Buddhist religions in preparation for the day when he would meet his nephew in debate. He spent many years in Southern India pursuing his studies, and when he returned to seek out his nephew, he learned that the greatly wise Shariputra had left the home life to follow the Buddha after having defeated all the master-debators from the five parts of India in debate when he was only eight years old.

Mahakaushthila was displeased to learn that his nephew was a disciple of the Buddha, because he had naturally hoped that after all his years of study and with his unsurpassed debating-powers, he would win the respect and loyalty of the child. He decided to challenge the Buddha, proposing that if he won a debate with the Buddha, the Buddha would relinquish Shariputra to him. And just to show his confidence, he blatantly added that he would chop off his head as an offering to the Buddha if he lost the debate.

Once he went before the Buddha, however, his confidence wavered and he searched frantically through his dharmas for a tenet of doctrine to form the basis of this all-important debate. Finally the Buddha said, “Well, speak up. Establish your principle and I will consider your request.”

“Basically, I do not accept any principle,” said Kaushthila finally and a bit triumphantly, thinking that this would render the Buddha speechless.

“Oh?” replied the Buddha without hesitation. “Do you accept *that* position?”

Bewildered, Shariputra’s uncle thought, “If I say I don’t accept the position of having no position, I will have destroyed my own doctrine and will lose the debate. But if I say I do accept it, my acceptance will be in direct opposition to my basic tenet.” Caught in the horns of this dilemma, Kaushthila hesitated a fraction of a second and then, without a word, turned on his heels and ran as fast as he could out of the room, out of the Buddha’s Way-place, out of the gardens, and down the road for several miles without stopping. Eventually, he regained some self-control, recalled that he was a man of his word, and realized that he must return to the Buddha and offer him his head. When he arrived and asked the Buddha for a knife, however, the Buddha explained that in the Buddhadharma things are not done that way. Then the Buddha spoke Dharma for Mahakaushthila and enabled him to open his Dharma eye. Once his Dharma eye was opened, he could see clearly the fallacies in the dharmas of the non-Buddhist paths that he had studied so rigorously, and he requested permission to leave the home life and follow the Buddha. Mahakaushthila’s name means “Big Knees.” Some say his ancestors’ kneecaps were big, and some say that Kaushthila’s own kneecaps were big. In general, large kneecaps were a family trait. Mahakaushthila was first among the Buddha’s disciples in debate.

Mahamaudgalyayana's name means "Kolita Tree" because his father and mother prayed to the spirit of that tree for a son. He was foremost among the disciples in spiritual penetrations.

Purnamaitreyaniputra, another Sanskrit name, means "Son of Fullness and Compassion". "Purna", which means "full", refers to his father's name, which meant "Fulfilled Vows". "Maitreyani", which means "Compassionate Woman", was his mother's name. "Putra" means "son". What was his particular talent? Whereas Shariputra was foremost in wisdom, and Mahamaudgalyayana was foremost in spiritual penetrations, Purnamaitreyaniputra was foremost in speaking Dharma. No one else could explain the sutras with such subtlety and in such a deep and moving way. When Purna spoke the sutras, heavenly maidens scattered flowers, and golden lotuses welled up from the earth. Whoever would like to be foremost in speaking Dharma can recite "Namo Venerable Purna", over and over, and Purna will use his wisdom and eloquence to aid you in speaking Dharma so that you will be able to move people. How will they be moved? They won't doze off when you are lecturing sutras. When Purna spoke Dharma, no one was able to go to sleep. He expressed the characteristics of all dharmas well and so was said to have unobstructed eloquence.

Subhuti, another of the ten great disciples, was foremost in understanding emptiness. His name has three meanings: "Born to Emptiness", "Splendid Apparition", and "Good Luck". When Subhuti was born, all the wealth in his household – all the gold, silver, and precious gems – disappeared. The treasuries stood empty. No one knew where it had all gone, but since the disappearance of the wealth coincided with the birth, the infant was given the name "Born to Emptiness".

Seven days after his birth, all the riches reappeared, and so the child was renamed "Splendid Apparition". His parents wanted to find out whether their child was good or bad, so they went to a diviner soon after his birth. In India there was no *Book of Changes* (I Ching). Instead they used the diviner to figure out whether their

child was good or bad. He came up with "good" and "lucky", so the child was renamed "Good Luck".

Subhuti was foremost in understanding, and so in the *Vajra Sutra* he is the Buddha's interlocutor; that is, it was he who asked Shakyamuni Buddha to explain the doctrine of prajna.

Upanishad, also Sanskrit, means "Dust-Nature". Upanishad awakened to the Way when he saw that the nature of all external objects is fundamentally empty; he awakened to the doctrine of impermanence as it is embodied in the nature of external objects.

And others means that these six Bhikshus were not the only ones in the assembly. There were at least twelve hundred fifty disciples in the assembly, but these six held seniority and sat in the highest positions. Thus, they are mentioned by name to represent the assembly of great Arhats and great Bhikshus.

E2 Those enlightened to conditions.

Sutra:

Moreover limitless Pratyekas who were beyond study and those with initial resolve came to where the Buddha was to join the bhikshus' Pravarana at the close of the summer retreat.

Commentary:

The **numberless Pratyekas** were the Pratyekabuddhas, who belong to the vehicle of Those Enlightened by Conditions. This vehicle and the Sound-Hearer Vehicle of the great Arhats mentioned above are often referred to together as the Two Vehicles.

They had reached a level of being **beyond study**. Upon attainment of the fourth fruit of Arhatship, cultivators reach a position of being beyond learning. The term "Pratyekabuddha" can be interpreted as meaning "Solitary Enlightened Ones", referring to those who were enlightened by themselves at a time when no Buddha was in the world, but it also has come to refer to "Those Enlightened by Conditions" during a time when a Buddha is in the world.

Those Enlightened by Conditions follow the Buddha in cultivating the Twelve Causes and Conditions and thus awaken to the Way. The Twelve Causes and Conditions are:

1. Ignorance, which conditions activity;
2. Activity, which conditions consciousness;
3. Consciousness, which conditions name and form;
4. Name and form, which condition the six sense organs;
5. The six sense organs, which condition contact;
6. Contact, which conditions feeling;
7. Feeling, which conditions love;
8. Love, which conditions grasping;
9. Grasping, which conditions existence;
10. Existence, which conditions birth;
11. Birth, which conditions;
12. Old age and death.

When ignorance is extinguished, activity is extinguished; when activity is extinguished, consciousness is extinguished; when consciousness is extinguished, name and form are extinguished; when name and form are extinguished, contact is extinguished; when contact is extinguished, feeling is extinguished; when feeling is extinguished, love is extinguished; when love is extinguished, grasping is extinguished; when grasping is extinguished, existence is extinguished; when existence is extinguished, birth is extinguished; when birth is extinguished, old age and death are extinguished. Thus the Twelve Causes and Conditions can be extinguished.

Pratyekabuddhas who live at the time when a Buddha is in the world are called Those Enlightened by Conditions; nevertheless, in the Shurangama assembly there were cultivators who are properly called Solitary Enlightened Ones. How can that be? There were sages who had cultivated the Way in the mountains before Shakyamuni Buddha had realized Buddhahood, when there was no Buddha in the world. In the springtime, they watched the many

flowers blossom. In the autumn, they saw the yellow leaves fall. They observed the myriad things being born and dying; and by themselves, they awakened to the Way. Then after Shakyamuni Buddha realized Buddhahood, they left their caves in the crags deep in the mountains and desolate valleys, and came forth to help Shakyamuni Buddha propagate the Buddhadharma. Limitless numbers of them became part of that influential assembly.

Besides Pratyekabuddhas who were beyond learning, there were also Pratyekabuddhas **with initial resolve**, Arhats with initial resolve, and Bhikshus with initial resolve, who had not yet become mature in the Way. All **came to where the Buddha was to join the bhikshu's Pravarana at the close of the summer retreat**. In Buddhism, there is a rule that those who have left the home-life must pass the summer in retreat. This rule came about because for a period of ninety days, from the fifteenth of the fourth lunar month to the fifteenth of the seventh lunar month, the members of the Sangha lived in one place and did not go anywhere; they didn't go traveling or take a vacation. There were two reasons for this. First, the weather was very hot and made for especially uncomfortable traveling. That was particularly true in India. Second, insects and other small creatures are particularly abundant on the earth in summer. To avoid stepping on them and squashing them to death, to nurture compassion for all living beings and to protect them, the Bhikshus, the Bhikshunis, and the Buddha lived in one place and did not go out.

At the close of the summer retreat refers to the end of the ninety-day period of seclusion. During the three month retreat, people might have committed offenses and broken rules, and so at the close of the retreat, at the end of the ninety days, it was necessary to hold a communal examination during which everyone was encouraged to confess his offenses frankly. This was the "Pravarana". If anyone had committed offenses without realizing it, then others in the assembly were expected to question him and help him see his mistakes. Nothing was held back, and everyone was expected to answer the questions he was asked and to admit his

faults without argument. This discussion was carried on in an open, orderly fashion without anyone giving rise to afflictions or becoming angry when his errors and faults were pointed out. In this way they rid each other of their faults. This kind of communal examination was designed to cause people to change their errors and move toward the good. Everything that had happened before became a dead issue, and everything that happened from that day onward was like a new life. People were encouraged to do things that benefit body and mind and not to do things that do not benefit body and mind.

E3 Bodhisattvas.

F1 First, the pravarana assembly gathers.

Sutra:

Bodhisattvas from the ten directions who desired counsel in order to resolve the doubts in their minds were respectful and obedient to the Awesome but Compassionate One as they prepared to seek the Secret Meaning.

Commentary:

Besides the Two Vehicles of Sound-Hearers and Those Enlightened By Conditions, there were also **Bodhisattvas from the ten directions** in the Shurangama assembly. The "ten directions" are north, south, east, west, northeast, southeast, northwest, southwest, and above and below.

"I would expect there to be Bodhisattvas from the eight directions and from above," you may say, "but do Bodhisattvas also come from below?"

Yes, Earth Store Bodhisattva, for example, watches exclusively over things below us.

I discussed the word "Bodhisattva" in the introduction, so now the explanation will be brief. Bodhisattva is a Sanskrit word; "Bodhi" means "enlightenment" and "Sattva" means "sentient being". A Bodhisattva is one who enlightens those with sentience.

He himself is a sentient being who was originally just like ordinary people, but who afterward became enlightened.

Bodhisattvas have attained the enlightenment of self and can enlighten others. They can benefit themselves and benefit others. But their enlightenment is not yet perfect, so they are called Bodhisattvas.

"How many Bodhisattvas came from the ten directions?" you ask.

An incalculable number.

"What did they get together for? Did they come together to cause a commotion? To see a play? To go to a fair?"

No, they came because there were some things they did not understand. They **desired counsel in order to resolve their doubts in their minds**. They had questions. They wanted to ask about doctrines they could not understand.

"What doctrines in particular?"

The doctrine of the **Secret Meaning**, which refers to the "secret cause" spoken of in this sutra.

They **were respectful and obedient to the Awesome but Compassionate One as they prepared to seek the** Secret Meaning. The Bodhisattvas did not understand the doctrine of the secret cause. Therefore they came wishing to learn of the Dharma-door of the secret cause that leads to the complete meaning.

"Do you mean that the *Shurangama Sutra* that is now being explained is a sutra which even Bodhisattvas don't understand?" you ask.

It is true that the Bodhisattvas desired counsel to resolve their doubts because they did not understand the doctrines of the Sutra, but if you now understand and become enlightened, then you are Bodhisattvas, too. Don't disdain yourselves. Don't say, "How can I understand doctrines which Bodhisattvas didn't understand? I'd better quit now." It is just because these are doctrines that Bodhisat-

tvas don't understand that you are now being taught to understand. We have karmic connections with Shakyamuni Buddha and with the Dharma that he proclaimed and that remains in the world. So we now have the opportunity to come to understand doctrines that even the Bodhisattvas had not understood. We are now in an advantageous position, even though we have been born after Shakyamuni Buddha spoke the Dharma. Who knows how long a road those Bodhisattvas in the Shurangama assembly had to travel to get there? Not from our north, south, east, and west, perhaps, but from great distances from numberless other worlds. Now we have encountered this sutra. We have great good roots and great affinities that enable us to listen to this Dharma. Don't be afraid and think that since Bodhisattvas didn't understand it, you shouldn't attempt to study it. That's a mistaken attitude.

Sutra:

Then the Tathagata arranged his seat, sat quietly and peacefully, and for the sake of everyone in the assembly proclaimed the profound and mysterious. Those in the pure assembly at the banquet of Dharma obtained what they had never obtained before.

Commentary:

Then refers to the time when the *Shurangama Sutra* was spoken. It was a time when the conditions were appropriate – a time when the Shurangama Mantra was about to be proclaimed.

The Tathagata arranged his seat. "Tathagata," one of the ten titles of the Buddha, has been explained already.

Arranged his seat means that he opened his sitting-cloth, spread it out, and sat down on it.

Sat quietly and peacefully means the Tathagata sat "in purity", in the manner of one absorbed in dhyana, that is, "still consideration". "Peacefully" means at ease; he did not knit his eyebrows together straining to display the pose of one meditating but was very relaxed, with the faint trace of a smile on his face, making

those who saw him feel happy. This quiet peaceful style pleased those who looked at him and made them become resolved to learn from him.

And for the sake of everyone in the assembly. Why did the Buddha arrange his seat and sit quietly and peacefully? It was because he wished to enter samadhi, and, in peace and quiet, contemplate the basic natures of living beings. In the "assembly" there were twelve hundred fifty Bhikshus, countless Pratyekabuddhas who were beyond study, Bodhisattvas from the ten directions, and many more, countless hundreds of thousands of myriads of millions who circumambulated the Buddha. Although the number of people attending our Dharma assembly is not nearly as great, the assembly is still vast because there are limitless, boundless numbers of ghosts and spirits who have come to join us. Countless ghosts are outside listening to the Dharma, and vast numbers of spirits are standing outside protecting this place. If you don't believe it, take a look; you won't be able to count how many there are.

Proclaimed the profound and mysterious. "Proclaim" means to explain clearly and teach. "Profound" refers to the deep "secret cause". "Mysterious" and wonderful refer to the "complete meaning". He teaches the Dharma-door of the secret cause that leads to the complete meaning. If the Buddha did not speak about the secret cause, you would have no way to know of it. If the Buddha did not explain the complete meaning, you wouldn't be able to understand it. The mysterious and wonderful is whatever you don't know. What you already know you consider quite ordinary, but if you see something you have never tasted before, you'll want to have a taste of it no matter what.

The Bodhisattvas came desiring to understand the doctrine more fully, and Shakyamuni Buddha, knowing what was in the minds of those in the Dharma assembly, proclaimed the profound and mysterious principle.

Those in the pure assembly at the banquet of Dharma obtained what they had never obtained before. Speaking Dharma is compared to giving living beings flavorful Dharma to taste. When you have eaten your fill of flavorful Dharma, you will realize Buddhahood.

"Pure assembly" means that not one being who came to the assembly was unclean. All were pure in body and mind, without defilements. They did no evil and respectfully offered up good conduct. Since they did not engage in any improper or unwholesome behavior, they are referred to as the "pure assembly". This is the first time they had heard the wonderful Dharma, and so what they obtained was unprecedented. Unprecedented teaching also refers to the ninth of the Twelve Divisions of the Buddhist Canon, Dharma that has never been spoken before.

F2 The assembly that arrived later after hearing the Buddha's voice.

Sutra:

The Immortal's kalavinka-sound pervaded the ten directions and Bodhisattvas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges gathered at the Bodhimanda with Manjushri as their leader.

Commentary:

Kalavinka is Sanskrit for "wonderful sound"; it is the name of a bird whose cry can be heard at a great distance, even while it is still in the egg. Once the bird is hatched, its call can be heard even more clearly, and the sound is very pleasing to the ear. Here the reference is not to the bird's call but to the sound of the Buddha's voice, which is as pleasing, clear, and penetrating as the kalavinka's.

The Buddha is called **the Immortal** because in the past, Shakyamuni Buddha cultivated as a patient immortal and upon realizing enlightenment, he was known as the Great Enlightened Golden Immortal.

The Buddha's voice **pervaded the ten directions**: it can be heard everywhere. For example, the Buddha spoke Dharma in India and we in America can hear it. Under the right conditions, it can be heard more clearly than a radio, and it arrives faster than a telegraph message.

Once, the Buddha's disciple Mahamaudgalyayana, who was foremost of the Buddha's disciples in spiritual penetrations, became curious to know just how far the Buddha's voice reached. So he used his spiritual penetrations to travel east through numberless unreckonable lands, through hundreds of thousands of millions of Buddhalands. But when he had reached a land an enormous distance away, he still could hear the Buddha speaking Dharma as if it were spoken right into his ear. It was still perfectly clear.

The inhabitants of that far-off eastern land were huge. The shortest of them was thirty or forty feet tall. Maudgalyayana arrived at lunch time, and the bowls they were using were as large as our houses. The amount they ate far surpassed what we consume. Maudgalyayana perched on the edge of one of the bowls and stood watching the giants eat. Eventually one of them noticed him and exclaimed, "Oh? Where did that human-headed bug come from?" He was so tiny that they called him a human-headed bug.

But the Buddha of that far eastern land told them, "You must not speak like that. That is Maudgalyayana from the Saha world. He is foremost in spiritual penetrations among Shakyamuni Buddha's disciples. Don't ridicule him. He's not a human-headed bug." The disciples of that land were surprised indeed to learn that Shakyamuni Buddha's disciples were the size of insects.

Bodhisattvas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges gathered at the Bodhimanda.[5] The Ganges River in India is about fifteen miles wide and its sands are as fine as flour. So they are used as an analogy for the unreckonable number of Bodhisattvas who

5. "Bodhimanda" is Sanskrit for "place of enlightenment", a "Way-Place."

came to the Dharma assembly. The Bodhisattvas came to protect the place where Shakyamuni Buddha spoke the *Shurangama Sutra*. The Way-Place referred to is also this present Way-Place where the *Shurangama Sutra* is now being explained. The Bodhisattvas from the former assembly are also here. You should not look lightly on this place just because the room is small. There are also many great Bodhisattvas here listening to the sutras, protecting this Way-Place, and enabling it to become more flourishing every day. Would you like to meet them? I will tell you that they have **Manjushri as their leader**. Manjushri is a Sanskrit name that means "Wonderful Virtue", referring to his subtle, wonderful, inconceivable virtuous practices. He is also called "Wonderfully Lucky", because every place he goes becomes auspicious. Every time he comes to a Way-Place, the Way-Place becomes very auspicious.

In China, the Bodhimanda of Manjushri is at Wu Tai Mountain. He is referred to as the Great Wise Manjushri because he is foremost among the Bodhisattvas in wisdom. Among the Arhats, Shariputra is foremost in wisdom, but his wisdom is small compared to that of the Bodhisattvas.

CHAPTER 4

Ananda's Fall

C2 The prologue.
D1 The King and officials prepare offerings.

Sutra:

Then King Prasenajit, for the sake of his father, the late king, arranged on the day of mourning a vegetarian feast and invited the Buddha to the side rooms of the palace. He welcomed the Tathagata in person with a vast array of superb delicacies of unsurpassed wonderful flavors and himself invited the great Bodhisattvas.

Commentary:

King Prasenajit, whose name means "moonlight", was born in India on the same day the Buddha was. When the Buddha entered the world, a light illumined the entire country. King Prasenajit's father thought the light was connected with the birth of his son, so he named him "Moonlight". The child later succeeded the father to become the ruler of a country in India.

For the sake of his father, the late king. The fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month marked the close of the summer retreat for people who had left the home-life. On the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth days of the month the Pravarana is held, as I explained

earlier. The fifteenth marks the Ullambana Festival. The fifteenth day of the seventh month was also the day King Prasenajit recognized to be the anniversary of his father's death. It is referred to indirectly as **the day of mourning**, since one did not speak explicitly of one's father's death because of the pain and sorrow involved. Filial people find it very difficult to be reminded of their parents' deaths; remembering how good their parents were to them and how they have been unable to be sufficiently filial in return, they experience deep regret. Although mention of the anniversary of King Prasenajit's father's death was avoided, everyone knew of it, and the king chose that day to make offerings to the Triple Jewel and to do various good deeds. One does good deeds and makes offerings on such a day in order to rescue one's father and mother from the hells and secure for them rebirth in the heavens.

When Mahamaudgalyayana first obtained the six spiritual penetrations, he went exploring to find out where his mother was and discovered that she had fallen into the hells. Why had his mother fallen into the hells? It was because when she was alive she liked to eat seafood, and most especially enjoyed fish-eggs. How many lives do you suppose there are in a mess of fish-eggs? A vast number. Because she ate quantities of fish-eggs, thereby taking a vast number of lives, and because she did not believe in the Triple Jewel – because she did not believe in the Buddha, did not believe in the Dharma, and did not respect the Sangha – she fell into the hells upon her death. And then even Maudgalyayana with his Six Spiritual Penetrations could not save her.

It upset Maudgalyayana to see his mother in the hells enduring so much suffering. His samadhi-power was shaken. And so he used his spiritual penetrations to go to the hells, and he took with him a bowl of rice, which he gave to his mother. When his mother was alive, she had been very stingy. If she was asked to give a little money, her heart and liver began to ache and her very flesh hurt. It is said that parting with money is like cutting off a piece of one's own flesh. That's the way it was with her. She couldn't bear to give it up. As a result of her stingy habits, what do you suppose she did

when her son brought her the bowl of food? She grabbed it with her left hand and covered it with her right arm. Why did she cover it? She was afraid someone would steal her food. The place was full of ghosts, but she found a spot where there were none, and she stealthily took a bite of food. Who would have guessed that as soon as she put the food in her mouth it would turn to burning coals so that she couldn't eat it? Why was this? She was a hungry ghost, and – like all such ghosts – had a stomach as big as a bass drum and a throat as narrow as a needle. As a result, she couldn't eat. Even when she tried, her karmic obstacles caused the food to turn to fire. Confronted with this situation, Maudgalyayana, despite his spiritual penetrations, was powerless. He had no mantra to recite. And so he returned to his teacher. He used his spiritual penetrations to bring himself before the Buddha; he knelt and said, "My mother has fallen into the hells. I have come seeking the Buddha's compassion to help me rescue her."

The Buddha answered, "Your mother has fallen into the hells because she slandered the Triple Jewel, was not respectful toward the Triple Jewel, and did not believe in the Triple Jewel. You can't save her by yourself, Maudgalyayana. You must rely on the united strength of the Sangha of the ten directions in order to save your mother. On the fifteenth day of the seventh month you should make an offering of the finest vegetarian foods and drinks that have not been tasted by anyone before being offered to the Buddha and the Sangha. By making this offering, the Way-karma of the virtuous high Sangha-members of the ten directions will then be able to save your mother. Otherwise there is no way you can save her."

On the appointed day Mahamaudgalyayana did as the Buddha had instructed; he asked the great virtuous high Sanghans of the ten directions to come and rescue his mother. He prepared a vast array of superb delicacies of unsurpassed wonderful flavors, and made offerings to the Buddha. His mother was reborn in the heavens as a result of the strength of the greatly virtuous ones of the ten directions. Since that time, the Ullambana Festival has become an

annual celebration, a day upon which anyone can rescue his parents of seven lives past.

Ullambana is a Sanskrit word which means "rescuing those who are hanging upside down." This refers to the extreme suffering of the ghosts in the hells who are as tormented as one hanging upside down would be. The Ullambana is performed especially for releasing those undergoing the painful suffering of being hungry ghosts and enabling them to be reborn in the heavens.

The fifteenth day of the seventh month is the Day of the Buddha's Rejoicing and the Sangha's Pravarana. On that day the merit and virtue derived from making offerings to the Triple Jewel is several million times greater than that derived from offerings made on ordinary days. That was the day King Prasenajit chose to offer **a vegetarian feast** to the Buddha and to make offerings to the Triple Jewel on behalf of his father.

No meat was served, nor any of the five edible members of the allium family – onions, leeks, garlic, chives, or shallots – for all of those foods make people murky and confused.

He **invited the Buddha to the side rooms of the palace**. Why wasn't the banquet held in the main hall? The main hall was where orders were signed, governmental matters were carried on, and where humane and beneficent policy-making took place. The side rooms were reserved for banquets.

He welcomed the Tathagata in person with a vast array of superb delicacies of unsurpassed wonderful flavors. The king himself went out to welcome the Buddha. The banquet consisted of the finest array of foods and drinks – vegetarian dishes that were cooked to perfection – and their flavors were the finest to be had.

And himself invited the Great Bodhisattvas. The king himself signed the invitation, or perhaps he himself went to invite them, saying, "I wish to request the presence of all the Great Bodhisattvas to come and accept my offerings." He invited all the Great Bodhisattvas, as many as the sands in the Ganges River. How much food do you suppose he had to prepare for such a gathering? It must

have taken a lot of money, but King Prasenajit was probably not stingy like Maudgalyayana's mother, so he prepared a great offering.

Sutra:

In the city were also elders and laypeople who were also prepared to feed the Sangha at the same time, and they stood waiting for the Buddha to come and receive offerings.

Commentary:

The king wasn't the only one who was prepared to make offerings to the Buddha. There were also elders and laypeople in the city.

These are the Ten Virtues of an **Elder**:

1. honorable name;
2. lofty position;
3. great wealth;
4. heroic deportment;
5. deep wisdom;
6. maturity in years;
7. pure practice;
8. perfect propriety;
9. the praise of their superiors;
10. the trust of those below them.

They are perhaps of royal blood or of otherwise noble birth. They hold high-ranking positions as officials. They are really rich. Their awesome air is stern and severe; their sanguine energies are powerful and sure. They are courageous, awesome, magnanimous, and forthright. They are decisive and never procrastinate. Their wisdom is great and profound. Elders are usually between fifty and seventy years old. They conduct their affairs in a clean, undefiled, correct, and straightforward manner, and their integrity is impeccable. They are very lofty in their ideals. They are extremely courteous to everyone, never arrogant or condescending. Although

their manner is heroic, they do not bully people. When meeting someone they first bow from the waist and then ask after his health. They are never in the least bit crude. They are spoken of highly by their superiors. The people put their trust in the elder. They all wish the best for him – wish him to be a great official, hope he will be wealthy, hope that all good things come his way. Why? He in turn will use his wealth and position for the good of the people. He enjoys giving; the more money he has, the more it pleases everyone. As a great official his every effort is bent on pleasing the people, and the masses look up to him.

Laypeople refers to cultivators who are householders. They cultivate in their households.

The elders and laypeople **were also prepared to feed the Sangha at the same time**. The elders and laypeople were also aware of the merit and virtue derived from making offerings to the Triple Jewel on such an important day, the Day of the Buddha's Rejoicing, the Day of the Sangha's Pravarana. Probably the vegetarian food they prepared in no way compared to the delicacies offered by the king, however, so the text makes no mention of superb or wonderful flavors.

And they stood waiting for the Buddha to come and receive offerings. They stood in their doorways waiting for the Buddha to come and receive their offerings, speculating among themselves, "He'll come to my house today." "He's going to receive my offerings."

Not only did they wait for the Buddha, they also were waiting for the lofty and virtuous members of the Sangha to come and accept their offerings, and so sincere were they that they remained standing during their wait.

Today in Thailand, Burma, and Sri Lanka, donors kneel to make their offerings to the Sangha. When a member of the Sangha comes along, they add their offering to his bowl and then bow to him. Then he returns to the monastery to eat.

D2 The Buddha and Sangha go to accept the invitation.

Sutra:

The Buddha commanded Manjushri to assign the Bodhisattvas and Arhats to receive offerings from the various vegetarian hosts.

Commentary:

The Buddha commanded Manjushri. Kings can issue commands and so can the King of Dharma. Thus, the text says that the Buddha "commanded" Manjushri Bodhisattva **to assign the Bodhisattvas and Arhats**. How were they assigned? That would depend upon how many Bodhisattvas there were. Perhaps they were assigned to go on the rounds individually or perhaps they were divided into groups of twos and threes.

The great Bhikshus and the great Arhats, as well as the Bodhisattvas, were commanded **to receive offerings from the various vegetarian hosts**. This means that they went to the homes of the elders and laypeople and received their offerings. Although the Buddha has millions of transformation bodies, he would never display his spiritual penetrations just for the sake of a meal and go to the various donors' homes to appear as transformation Buddhas and seek alms at each door. It would never be done that way. If the Buddha were like that then spiritual penetrations would be cheaper than bean curd. And so he said to Manjushri, "You assign the Bodhisattvas and great Arhats so that they can go to each home and receive offerings."

D3 Ananda's fall is revealed.
E1 The circumstances leading to his fall.

Sutra:

Only Ananda, who, having accepted a special invitation earlier, had traveled far and had not yet returned, was late for the apportioning of the Sangha. No senior-seated one or Acharya was with him, so he was returning alone on the road.

Commentary:

Only Ananda. This is the whole reason he got into trouble. He was alone. What had Ananda done? He had **accepted a special invitation earlier**. Perhaps a month or so in advance, someone had made an appointment and said, "On the fourteenth day of the seventh month you certainly should come and receive offerings from us."

So he went. In fact, he went early. And so on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the day when everyone was receiving offerings, he **had traveled far and had not yet returned**. Basically, Bhikshus should not accept special invitations. For instance, if there are ten Sanghans here and you invite only one to go to your home to eat, you are issuing a special invitation. The one who has received the special invitation should not go. Why? The rule in Buddhism is that all the Sanghans of a Way-Place should be invited for the offerings together; but sometimes people who like good food ignore the rule and accept the special invitations they are given, thinking, "Why should I look after all of you? What counts is that I get my fill. My special invitation is a response to my blessings and virtue." They pay no attention to others.

Ananda probably had a bit of fondness for eating good food. Now think about it; during the close of the summer retreat it was absolutely impermissible to travel, and yet Ananda had accepted a special invitation and went out to receive offerings. And so he had already gone against the rules; he had already committed an offense. He was invited for the fourteenth of the month, and so he probably went on the thirteenth. After eating on the fourteenth he stayed the night, planning to return early the next day, and he **was late for the apportioning of the Sangha**. He didn't make it in time. Manjushri Bodhisattva was dividing up the Sangha.

No senior-seated one or Acharya was with him, so he was returning alone on the road. People who have left the home-life should go in twos and threes. The three would perhaps consist of a young Bhikshu, a senior Bhikshu and an Acharya. A "senior" is one

who has held the precepts purely for more than twenty years, and therefore is seated in the front of the assembly. "Acharya" is a Sanskrit word, which means "a teacher who exemplifies the rules." He is a master who follows the rules and understands them. There are Five Kinds of Acharya:

1. an Acharya under whom others may leave the home-life;
2. an Acharya who transmits the precepts;
3. a Karmadana Acharya;
4. an Acharya upon whom others may rely;
5. an Acharya who transmits the teachings.

One person can be all five kinds of Acharya. A person who is qualified to lecture the sutras and speak Dharma is an Acharya who transmits the teachings. He may also have a Way-Place where people may draw near him to study and practice, which makes him an Acharya upon whom others can rely. He may also teach people the rules and transfer merit to them every day before the Buddhas, asking the Buddhas to wash away their karmic offenses and to cause their good roots to increase. That makes him a Karmadana Acharya.

He may teach others how to request the precepts, what to say when they receive them, and how to reveal violations of precepts or other offenses before he bestows the precepts upon them. Then he is an Acharya who transmits precepts. He may receive people as left-home disciples, in which case he is an Acharya under whom others can leave the home-life.

An Acharya is one who helps you realize the Way. He aids you in your cultivation of the Way. He stands beside you and admonishes you, "Don't commit offenses." That is an Acharya. But Ananda didn't have a senior-seated one or Acharya with him in order to help him "guard the mind and be apart from offenses," and so he walked right into trouble. The worst thing he did was to be out returning alone on the road.

Basically, people who have left the home-life should always travel in pairs. If you truly have samadhi-power, then to do things on your own is not a problem. But if your samadhi-power is not sufficient, then it is very easy to encounter a demonic-obstacle. It is very easy to be affected by external states.

Still we should all thank Ananda. If he hadn't gone out alone and gotten into trouble, how could he have come to understand the *Shurangama Sutra*? We wouldn't have any opportunity to understand the Sutra ourselves because Shakyamuni Buddha wouldn't have been presented with the opportunity to speak the *Shurangama Sutra* to teach us how to cultivate samadhi. The fact remains that Ananda benefited us a great deal by his action.

Sutra:

On that day he had received no offerings, and so at the appropriate time Ananda took up his begging bowl and, as he traveled through the city, begged in successive order.

Commentary:

Since he had failed to return in time for the apportioning of the Sangha for that day's vegetarian offering, **he had received no offerings, and so at the appropriate time Ananda took up his begging bowl**. Bowl is *patra* in Sanskrit, meaning "a vessel of appropriate measure." It contains enough, but not more than enough, to satisfy one's needs.

As he traveled through the city, he **begged in successive order**. He went from house to house in Shravasti, from door to door. Since some give more and some give less, it is necessary to stop at more than one house, but according to the rules one does not stop at more than seven houses. If after stopping at seven houses one has not received any offerings, one must do without food that day.

Sutra:

As he first began to beg, he thought to himself that down to the very last danapati who would be his vegetarian host he

would not question whether they were clean or unclean; whether they were ksatriyas of honorable name or chandalas. While practicing equality and compassion he would not merely select the lowly but was determined to perfect all living beings' limitless merit and virtue.

Commentary:

As he first began to beg, he thought to himself that down to the very last danapati who would be his vegetarian host. When Ananda took up his bowl and went to receive food offerings, his very first thought was about his donors: "From the very first to the very last danapati who becomes my vegetarian host." "Danapati" is a Sanskrit word which is transliterated into Chinese by two characters which also shed light on its meaning: the first, *tan* (檀), represents the Sanskrit *dana*, and means "to give," and the second, *yueh* (越), means "to transcend." The meaning of danapati as based on that transliteration, then, is "one who gives so that he can transcend birth and death." A layperson who gives offerings to people who have left the home-life is called a danapati, "one who gives in order to transcend."

By the "very last donor" Ananda meant the one whose offerings would give him the final amount of food necessary for that day.

He would not question whether they were clean or unclean; whether they were ksatriyas of honorable name or chandalas. He would not notice if they were poor or rich. Kshatriyas are the noble or royal class of India. Chandalas are butchers, interpreted in Chinese to be "those who kill pigs," because in India the killing of cattle is forbidden. This caste also included other classes of India, trades such as removing dead bodies, butchering animals, and so forth. And so when chandalas walked down the road, most people would not walk with them. They had to walk on separate roads. In order to identify themselves as being lower than ordinary people, they were required to ring bells and hold banners as they walked down the road.

While practicing equality and compassion he would not merely select the lowly but was determined to perfect all living beings' limitless merit and virtue. He paid no attention to how honorable might be the person from whom he was receiving offerings, nor did he receive offerings exclusively from the lowly. He intended to give all living beings the opportunity to plant blessings.

When donors make offerings, they plant blessings that will grow and ripen in the future. Thus people who have left the home-life are called "fields of blessings." One who has the reward of many blessings is in all ways content. So if you feel your reward of blessings is not sufficient, you should make offerings to the Triple Jewel and plant more blessings.

Ananda was determined that every wish of every living being be fulfilled. His hope was that the boundless merit and virtue which living beings seek would be completely fulfilled through him.

Sutra:

Ananda already knew that the Tathagata, the World Honored One, had admonished Subhuti and great Kashyapa for being Arhats whose hearts were not fair and equal, and he regarded with respect the Tathagata's instructions on impartiality, to save everyone from doubt and slander.

Commentary:

Why did Ananda want to practice equality and compassion in receiving offerings? Earlier, he had heard Shakyamuni Buddha admonish Subhuti and Mahakashyapa and call them Arhats, meaning Arhats of the Small Vehicle, not great Arhats of the Great Vehicle. Why did he do that? It was Subhuti's opinion that he should seek alms exclusively from the rich. "Rich people should plant more blessings," he said. "If they continue to do good deeds, then in their future lives they will continue to be wealthy. If they don't give now, they won't be rich in the next life. In order to help the rich, I seek alms from them."

Subhuti’s method was an example of “avoiding the poor and favoring the rich.” In complete contrast to him, Mahakashyapa sought alms exclusively from the poor. He thought, “Poor people should plant blessings and do good deeds, so that in their future lives they can be wealthy and honored. If I don’t help them out by receiving alms from them, then in the next life and on into the future, they will continue to be poor.” And so they were both small Arhats. I believe there was another reason underlying their behavior. It seems fairly certain that Subhuti liked to eat good food, and Great Kashyapa, foremost among the disciples in his practice of asceticism, ate what others couldn’t eat, endured what others couldn’t endure, bore what others couldn’t bear, and yielded where others couldn’t yield. Evidently he was unconcerned about what kind of food he ate, so he sought alms from the poor and gave them the opportunity to plant blessings. The gifts of food and drink offered by poor people are never as fine as those given by the wealthy. The food the rich throw out on the streets is bound to be better than the offerings of the poor.

Shakyamuni Buddha knew that these two disciples did not practice equality and compassion in their alms-rounds. He was aware of the discriminations they made, and so **the Tathagata, the World Honored One, had admonished Subhuti and Great Kashyapa for being Arhats whose hearts were not fair and equal**.

Ananda **regarded with respect the Tathagata’s instructions on impartiality, to save everyone from doubt and slander.** He was extremely respectful of this Dharma-door of equality, which advised against choosing among donors. Minds that make such discriminations do not belong to the Great Vehicle Dharma but to selfish people. Remembering the reprimand Subhuti and Great Kashyapa had received from Shakyamuni Buddha, Ananda did not want to imitate them, and so he carefully practiced equality and compassion.

Shakyamuni Buddha's Dharma-door was a wide-open expedient free of the slightest obstruction, devoid of any limitation. If one begs exclusively from the rich or from the poor, one can easily arouse people's doubts and cause them to slander the Dharma. Collecting alms impartially makes everyone's doubts and slander melt away and disappear altogether. Everyone can happily plant blessings and have his wishes fulfilled.

E2 The incident of the actual fall.

Sutra:

Having crossed the city moat, he walked slowly through the outer gates, his manner stern and proper as he honored with propriety the method of obtaining food.

Commentary:

Shravasti was surrounded by a moat just like those found around some ancient cities in China. Water was kept in the moat at all times to form a protection for the city. Once Ananda had crossed the moat, he arrived within the confines of the great city of Shravasti.

Having crossed the city moat, he walked slowly through the outer gates, his manner stern and proper as he strictly respected the rules for obtaining vegetarian food.

Ananda was dignified, with eyes straight ahead, and at the same time extremely respectful. In this way he slowly passed through the outer gates of the city. He exhibited an awesome manner and model deportment; he didn't look at improper spectacles, nor did he eavesdrop. All the time that he held his bowl, he displayed the utmost propriety and respect for the Dharma of receiving, not daring to be the least bit casual or lax as he traveled through the streets.

Sutra:

At that time, because Ananda was begging in sequential order, he passed by a house of prostitution and was waylaid by

a powerful artifice. By means of a mantra of the Kapila religion, formerly of the Brahma Heaven, the daughter of Matangi drew him onto an impure mat.

Commentary:

At that time Ananda was being stern and proper, honoring with propriety the method for obtaining food. Because Ananda was **begging in sequential order –** by going door to door, house to house – **he passed by a house of prostitution and was waylaid by a powerful artifice**. It was not real, but was something conjured up. **The daughter of Matangi** had urged her mother to make use of a mantra, which allegedly had come from the gods of the Brahma Heaven and had been brought down to the human realm. But it was phony; it was empty and false, so it is called an "artifice."

Matangi is a Sanskrit name, interpreted to mean "Vulgar Lineage," indicating that she was not honorable. Her daughter's name was *Prakriti*, which is Sanskrit for "Basic Nature."

Ananda was snared by **a mantra of the Kapila religion, formerly of the Brahma Heaven**. Matangi had learned her false mantra from members of the tawny-haired religion. In fact, the mantric device was falsely named, because it was not really a transmission from the Brahma Heaven. Its proponents just claimed it was, and in that way got people to believe in them. However, the recitation of the mantra was able to turn Ananda's spirit and soul upside down and he fell into a stupor as if asleep, dreaming, or drunk. Without realizing what was happening he went into the house of prostitution. The mantra "which came from the Brahma Heaven," had rendered him totally oblivious and had totally confused his self-nature.

"Basically Ananda was a sage who had been certified as having attained the first fruition. Then why was the mantra purported to have come from the Brahma Heaven able to confuse him?" you wonder.

He became confused because he had concentrated on studying the sutras and had not been attentive to samadhi-power; and so

although he had attained the first fruition; his samadhi-power was still insufficient. Therefore when he encountered this kind of demon he was confused by her, and the daughter of Matangi **drew him onto an impure mat**.

Ananda was extremely handsome. His features were almost as perfect as the thirty-two fine marks of the Buddha. Ananda's skin was snowy white and glistened like silver, sparkled like frost. Most Indians had dark complexions but Ananda's skin was extremely soft, supple, smooth, and especially fair. That is why Matangi's daughter was infatuated with Ananda the moment she laid eyes on him and went running to tell her mother that she wanted Ananda.

"He's a disciple of the Buddha," her mother said. "How can you want him? He's a Bhikshu and cannot marry. You can't have him."

"That doesn't make any difference to me," replied her daughter. "Mother, you're going to have to think of a way to trap Ananda for me. If I can't marry Ananda I won't go on living," she said obstinately.

Her desire was so overpowering that it was a matter of life and death.

"Ah," thought Matangi, "She loves him so much. I'll have to think of a way to do what cannot be done." So she used the mantra, a deviant dharma from the Kapila religion, and recited until Ananda became hypnotized. He followed her in a daze like a drunken beggar, in such a stupor that he couldn't tell east from west, or north from south. He went right into the house and followed Matangi's daughter into her room and onto the bed.

Sutra:

With her licentious body she stroked and rubbed him until he was on the verge of destroying the precept-substance.

Commentary:

This was a dangerous spot to be in! **With her licentious body she** caressed him until **he was on the verge of destroying the precept-substance**. He still hadn't broken it. This is an important

point. When one receives the precepts one becomes endowed with a certain substance, which, if destroyed, is as serious as if your very life had been cut off. It is extremely important for people who have left the home-life not to break precepts. If precepts are broken, you might just as well die. As for Ananda, if the text said that his precept-substance was "already" destroyed, it would mean it would be all over for him, Ananda would have fallen, and in the future he would have had a great deal of difficulty in cultivating successfully.

Why did Matangi's daughter have such a compelling attraction for Ananda? It stemmed from the fact that Ananda and Matangi's daughter had been married to one another in five hundred former lives. Because they had been a married couple in so many former lives, as soon as she saw Ananda this time, her old habits took over, and she fell madly in love with him. Ananda had been her husband before and she was determined to have him for a husband again. Because of those seeds passed down life after life, she was now willing to sacrifice everything – even her very life – for the sake of her love for Ananda.

D4 The Tathagata compassionately rescues him.
E1 He quickly returns and speaks the mantra.

Sutra:

The Tathagata, knowing Ananda was being taken advantage of by the indecent artifice, finished the meal and immediately began his return journey. The king, great officials, elders, and laypeople followed along after the Buddha, desiring to hear the essentials of Dharma.

Commentary:

Whenever the Buddha accepted an offering he always spoke the Dharma after the meal for the sake of the vegetarian host. Only after speaking the Dharma would he return to the sublime abode of the Jeta Grove. But this time there were special circumstances. **The Tathagata, knowing Ananda was being taken advantage of by the indecent artifice, finished the meal and immediately began his return journey.** Knowing that Ananda had met with difficulty

and was on the verge of destroying the Precept-substance, the Buddha ate quickly, and as soon as he finished he immediately returned to the sublime abode of the Jeta Grove. In fact, I imagine he did not eat very much, since his beloved disciple and cousin and personal attendant was in trouble. The Buddha thought, "Ah, my attendant is being waylaid by demons. He's been captured by demons. How can this be?"

The king, great officials, elders, and laypeople followed along after the Buddha, desiring to hear the essentials of the Dharma. Everyone knew that there was some important reason why the Buddha had not spoken Dharma for the vegetarian host after the meal. They thought that the reason for the hasty retreat would certainly be announced, so everyone – the king, the officials, the elders, and the laypeople – followed the Buddha back to the sublime abode of the Jeta Grove. Why? Everyone had forgotten everything else but the single-minded desire to understand whatever important principle of Dharma was about to be spoken. They didn't know what had come up that was so unusual. Everyone was anxious to hear what the Buddha would say.

Sutra:

Then the World Honored One emitted a hundred rays of jeweled and fearless light from his crown. Within the light appeared a thousand-petalled precious lotus, upon which was seated a transformation-body Buddha in full-lotus posture, proclaiming a spiritual mantra.

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha, **the World Honored One, emitted a hundred rays of jeweled and fearless light from his crown**. The hundreds of rays can represent the hundred realms. **Within the light appeared a thousand-petalled** jeweled **precious lotus**, which can represent the Thousand Suchnesses. These meanings can be investigated gradually. Now it is enough to understand the passage in general. **From his crown**, the crown of his head, were emitted a hundred rays of jeweled light and from these lights

radiated fearless lights. The rays of "fearless lights" showed possession of a great awesome virtue. Fearing nothing, they were able to subdue all heavenly demons and externalists. No mantra whatever could withstand them. Not even one "purported to have come from the Brahma Heaven."

The hundred rays of jeweled light also brought forth a thousand-petalled jeweled lotus, **upon which was seated a transformation-body Buddha in full-lotus posture**. In "full lotus-posture" you sit with your legs crossed over one another, your feet resting on the tops of opposite thighs. There is a great deal of merit and virtue involved in sitting in full lotus.

This transformation-body Buddha was **proclaiming a spiritual mantra**. He pronounced the Shurangama Mantra. For Shakyamuni Buddha to have a transformation-body Buddha speak the mantra represents the secret cause within the secret cause, the king of kings of mantras. The Shurangama Mantra is extremely important. If you who study the Buddhadharma can learn the Shurangama Mantra in this life, you will not have been a human being in vain. If you do not learn the Shurangama Mantra, it will be like climbing a mountain made of the Seven Jewels – gold, silver, crystal, lapis lazuli, mother-of-pearl, red pearl, and carnelian – and coming back down empty-handed. You arrive at the top of the mountain and you think about picking up some gold or perhaps some pearls, but then wonder if you should take silver instead. In the end you can't decide which ones it would be best to take and so you come away without any at all. That is the situation of people who can't memorize the Shurangama Mantra. So I hope that everyone will at the very least study hard enough so that they are able to recite it from memory. Not to speak of several weeks' effort, it is worth several years' effort if needed. It is extremely valuable. And this opportunity you have now to encounter it is extremely rare, very hard to come by. It is "the unsurpassed, profound, subtle, wonderful Dharma." There is nothing higher, nothing deeper. The Buddha used the Shurangama Mantra to save Ananda, who had already attained the first fruition of Arhatship. Now, if you ordinary people

do not rely on the Shurangama Mantra, how can you end birth and death? Therefore each of you should resolve to take my advice in this.

I will tell you a story that illustrates the merit of sitting in full lotus-posture. Once there was a Bhikshu who did not cultivate, but concentrated instead on reciting sutras and repentances for the dead for money. Whenever someone died, he would accept requests to take the deceased across the sea of suffering by reciting sutras and performing repentances.

One day he was returning to the monastery after having spent the day reciting sutras for the deceased. He passed a house with a dog in the yard. The dog began to bark at him, and he overheard the wife inside the house say to her husband: “Go see who it is.” Then the Bhikshu saw the husband peer out the slit in the curtain and reply, “Oh, it’s just that ghost who peddles sutras and repentances.”

He passed on by, but the words echoed in his ears. Why had that man called him a “ghost who peddles sutras and repentances”? Why hadn’t he called him a “Buddha” who peddles sutras and repentances? Or an “Immortal Sage” who peddles sutras and repentances? As he continued on his way to the monastery, it suddenly began to rain and he took shelter under a bridge. “I guess I’ll sit in meditation,” he thought, and he pulled up his legs in full lotus-posture. After he had sat for a while, two ghosts came by. When they reached the spot where he was sitting they suddenly stopped, and one said to the other, “There’s a golden pagoda! Hurry up! Let’s start bowing. The sharira (relics) of the Buddha are kept in golden pagodas! If we bow to the Buddha’s relics our offenses will soon disappear.” With that the two began to bow. After they had bowed for a while, the legs of the “ghost who peddled sutras and repentances” started to hurt, and in order to be more comfortable, he released the full lotus-posture into half-lotus, that is, with the left leg above, the right leg beneath, and the left foot resting on the right thigh. The next time the two ghosts came up from a bow they

noticed something strange. "Hey," said one to the other. "That golden pagoda just turned into a silver pagoda! Do you see that?"

"So what?" said the other. "Silver pagodas are still something special. We should keep bowing." So the two of them kept bowing. They bowed for about half an hour or an hour, or maybe it was only twenty minutes; there was no clock, so there's no way to know. Soon enough the Bhikshu's legs hurt again. He unfolded them and lazily stretched them out, just like some people do when they are tired of sitting in meditation. "I think I'll lie down," he thought. But just then the two bowing ghosts caught a glimpse of their pagoda turning into a pile of mud. "Hey! Look at that!" one cried. "Quick! Let's clobber it." Realizing the ghosts were about to beat him up, the Bhikshu froze in fear and slipped neatly back into full lotus just in the nick of time. "Oh!" the two ghosts cried in unison. "It does have the Buddha's relics in it! It's going through all kinds of weird changes. One minute it's a golden pagoda, the next a silver pagoda, and then it turns into mud. We'd better just keep bowing no matter what happens next," and they continued non-stop until dawn.

The incident had a lasting effect on the "ghost who peddled sutras and repentances." He sat there thinking, "If I sit in full lotus there is a golden pagoda, if I sit in half lotus there is a silver pagoda, and if I don't sit at all there's nothing but a pile of mud. I had better start to cultivate and stop peddling sutras and repentances." He buried himself in the task at hand and worked diligently at his cultivation. After he had cultivated, he eventually became enlightened and was given the name Dhyana Master Gwei Bi, "Pressured by Ghosts," because if it hadn't been for those two ghosts who were threatening to beat him up, he might have continued to procrastinate and never gotten around to cultivating.

E2 The messenger is sent and Ananda is rescued.

Sutra:

He commanded Manjushri to take the mantra and go provide protection, and, when the evil mantra was extin-

guished, to lend support, and to encourage Ananda and Matangi’s daughter to return to where the Buddha was.

Commentary:

It takes a person with great wisdom to rescue a stupid person. Although Ananda had certified to the first fruition of Arhatship, his samadhi-power was not enough to keep him from being confused by Matangi’s false mantra. To save him, the Buddha manifested a hundred rays of jeweled light, and a thousand-petalled lotus, and a transformation-body Buddha who spoke the Shurangama Mantra. Still, Ananda was a long way off, and so the Buddha needed a member of the Sangha to take the mantra and go save Ananda. So Shakyamuni Buddha **commanded Manjushri to take the mantra and go provide protection**. He was to go to the house of prostitution, the home of Matangi, and rescue and protect Ananda. Within the Shurangama Mantra are several phrases that are specifically directed at breaking up externalist dharmas; in this its efficaciousness is unsurpassed. As soon as Manjushri went to Matangi’s house and recited the Shurangama Mantra, the evil mantra was dispelled. The “mantra purported to have come from the Brahma Heaven” was no longer efficacious. Ananda woke up.

The Bodhisattva Manjushri then needed **to lend support, and to encourage Ananda and Matangi’s daughter to return to where the Buddha was**. Ananda had been confused by the mantra-trick and had just “come to,” so he was disoriented and had no idea where he was; it was as if he had just awakened from a dream. So Manjushri Bodhisattva lent him support, took hold of him and pulled him up.

“Why did he encourage Matangi’s daughter?” you ask.

If he had not encouraged her at that time, her own life would have been in danger and perhaps his as well. She was so distraught she might have tried to kill Manjushri Bodhisattva for having taken away the one she loved so much. Had he not reassured her at that point, she would have been beside herself. Who knows what she might have done out of her jealousy?

Manjushri Bodhisattva said, "You are a very beautiful girl. I can see you are a good woman. Come along with me and we will go talk things over with the Buddha and find out if your wishes can be fulfilled. I'll put in a good word for you. It will all work out, I'm sure." He chose his words carefully, expediently, being discreet and tactful so as not to arouse her anger or cause her to harm or kill herself. With Manjushri supporting Ananda and encouraging Matangi's daughter, they returned to where the Buddha was, to the sublime abode of the Jeta Grove.

From "Thus I have heard" to this point in the text is called the "preface". The preface includes the "testimony of faith", that is, the section that fulfills the Six Fulfillments, and certifies that the sutra can be believed.

The entire preface is also called the "postscript", although it comes at the beginning of the sutra.

"Isn't that a contradiction?" one may ask. "How can it be both a preface and a postscript?"

When the sutra was first spoken, this initial section of text did not exist. It was written by Ananda at the time the sutras were compiled, and for this reason is called the "postscript".

The preface is also called the "general preface" because other sutras also have similar prefaces. It is called the "foreword" as well, because it is placed at the beginning of the sutra, even though it was written after the sutra was spoken.

The second part of the preface is called the "prologue". It explains the causes and conditions involving Ananda and Matangi's daughter that led to the speaking of this sutra.

It is important for those who study the Buddhadharma to be able to distinguish the various sections of the sutra text. In this way one can come to "deeply enter the Sutra Treasury". Boring your way in you will come to have "wisdom like the sea". In fact you should think like this: "It is I who spoke this sutra. Its principles have come forth from my heart." If you can be like that, in such a way that the

sutra and your basic substance become one, then there will be no deep and no shallow. You will no longer feel that the study of sutras is difficult, but will take it as a matter of course.

The text of the *Shurangama Sutra* is extremely well written. Of all the Chinese classics, such as *The Four Books* and *The Five Classics*, none is a finer piece of literature. I regard the *Shurangama Sutra* as the ultimate in literary texts, wonderful to the extreme. People who wish to study Chinese should not miss the opportunity to penetrate the *Shurangama Sutra* text. Anyone who does so will have a thorough foundation in the Chinese language and will be able to understand all of Chinese literature.

B2 Text proper.
C1 A complete explanation of the wonderful samadhi for accomplishing Buddhahood.
D1 Ananda requests samadhi.
E1 He regrets excessive learning and requests samadhi.

Sutra:

Ananda saw the Buddha, bowed, and wept sorrowfully, regretting that from time without beginning he had been preoccupied with erudition and had not yet perfected his strength in the Way. He respectfully and repeatedly requested an explanation of the very first expedients of the wonderful shamatha, samapatti, and dhyana, by means of which the Tathagatas of the ten directions had realized Bodhi.

Commentary:

Manjushri Bodhisattva had used the Shurangama Mantra to rescue Ananda, and after a time on the road, during which a gentle breeze probably sprang up, brushing softly against their faces and bringing Ananda awake from his dream, they reached the Jeta Grove.

Ananda saw the Buddha, bowed, and wept sorrowfully. His grief was extreme. Sorrow welled up from deep within him and he wept silently, out of remorse. The finest word in this section of text is the word **regretting**, because it indicates that Ananda had awakened. If he hadn’t been regretful, then upon returning to the

Jeta Grove he still would not have been able to be honest about what had happened. He would have returned to where the Buddha was and acted as if nothing had happened. He would have put on a front. The very best thing about Ananda was that he didn’t put on a front. He came back, faced the Buddha and bowed, without any pretences, because he knew he had to correct his errors and change his ways. He wanted the Buddha to teach him new paths. Because of this, he was able later to realize enlightenment.

From time without beginning means not just this time in this present life, but many lives, many eons past, from the time Ananda very first became a person. No one could say when that was, so it is referred to as time without beginning.

He had been preoccupied with erudition. Life after life, time after time he had concentrated on his studies, so that he had developed “great learning and strong memory”; but he had neglected to develop, **had not yet perfected his strength in the Way**, that is his samadhi-power. His samadhi-power was very meager, extremely immature. Fortunately, Shakyamuni Buddha had rescued him, so he placed himself on the ground in obeisance, paying deference with his body and mind. **He respectfully and repeatedly** bowed over and over again, without being the least bit lazy about it.

He **requested** of Shakyamuni Buddha that the Buddha explain the principle by which **the Tathagatas of the ten directions had realized Bodhi**. He didn’t ask the Tathagatas, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions to speak; you should not misread the text at this point. If Ananda was asking the Buddhas of the ten directions to speak, what was Shakyamuni Buddha doing there? He was Shakyamuni Buddha’s disciple; would he have ignored what was right before him and gone seeking instead for some distant Buddhas of the ten directions? No; the text means that he turned to Shakyamuni Buddha and asked him to explain what doctrine the Tathagatas of the ten directions had relied on to become enlight-ened. Ananda didn’t know what skill he ought to develop in order

to realize Buddhahood; but he had heard of three kinds of samadhi – **shamatha, samapatti, and dhyana**; so he brought them up and referred to them each as **wonderful**, in order to emphasize them.

As soon as Shakyamuni Buddha heard his request, he knew Ananda was an outsider: that he didn't know about the samadhi for realizing Buddhahood. And what is the samadhi for the realization of Buddhahood? It is the Shurangama Samadhi. It was just because Ananda didn't understand the Shurangama Dharma-door that he proceeded to bring up a lot of arguments, as the text describes below.

The very first expedients. Ananda wanted to know about expedient Dharma-doors for the beginner, the easiest way to start cultivating, the simplest methods of practice.

Some people have immediately become prejudiced. "Ananda concentrated on erudition and almost ended up by falling," they say. "Obviously it is useless to study a lot. I'm going to cultivate samadhi exclusively, and not study at all." This one-sided view is not in accord with the Middle Way. The principle of being in accord with the Middle Way is to be neither too far to the left or too far to the right, or too far in front or too far behind. Ananda was also prejudiced because he concentrated on learning and neglected samadhi. But if you concentrate exclusively on samadhi and neglect learning, your wisdom won't develop. You must study to gain understanding, and you must also practice to gain samadhi, and then the two will be integrated. At the Buddhist Lecture Hall we both investigate Sutras and meditate. By putting aside everything else and not letting your mind wander to the north, south, east, and west, you can concentrate your whole attention on the Buddhadharma. Don't waste valuable time. Don't just chatter on at random or do things which are of no benefit. You can't make squares and circles if you don't have a compass, and in the same way, you have to follow the rules in your daily practice. In the Ch'an hall, when the wooden fish is hit three times it is a signal to stop and be still. Durinq that period no one should talk. Those who

do may receive a beating from Wei T'o Bodhisattva's Jeweled Pestle.

"He hasn't hit me yet," you say.

He hasn't gotten angry yet. But when he does, things get serious fast. So everyone should take care to genuinely follow the rules. When the rules are followed, there can be successful accomplishments. Don't be so casual.

The people in this assembly are basically very well-behaved, but just in case some may have forgotten the importance of the rules I am mentioning them once again. During the period set aside for study of the *Shurangama Sutra*, all should single-mindedly apply themselves to the study of the Sutra and to their meditation. If you do, I can guarantee there will be a response and you will have some accomplishment. If you do not become greatly enlightened, you will certainly gain a little enlightenment. You won't miss out on the merit and virtue. If you are sincere and single-minded during this period of study and practice, you will certainly gain some advantages. I am not cheating you. However, if you don't follow the rules you'll be like the Mongolian who goes to the opera and misses out altogether.[6] You've come from far away for no other reason than to study the Dharma, and that makes me very happy – so much so, that no matter how hard I have to work I don't fear the suffering. During the Dharma assembly I am determined to research and explain the Sutra, do everything in my power to bring the Sutra out in the open for you. It is my hope that all of you will obtain the advantages to be gained from the Buddhadharma. However, although I say this, whether you listen or not is still up to you. If you chose not to listen, there is nothing I can do, because I am not you and you are not me.

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6. When someone is totally out of it, the Chinese use this phrase to describe him, saying he's like the Mongolian who goes to see a Chinese opera and comes away without having understood a word that was said.

You can also say that you are me and I am you. How? We are connected to one another in that we breathe the same air. Thought of in this way, everyone becomes one identical substance, and so you shouldn’t obstruct me and I shouldn’t obstruct you. Everyone investigates the Buddhadharma together and becomes enlightened together. If there is one who has not yet become enlightened, then I will not have fulfilled my responsibility.

Pay no attention to whether the Buddhadharma seems deep or shallow. You should resolve: “If I understand, I will investigate further, and if I don’t understand, I want to investigate even more.” Understanding a little is a lot better than not understanding anything at all. You should say to yourself: “If I understand one word of the Sutra the Dharma Master is lecturing, that’s one word which I never understood before, and that makes it worthwhile; I’ve obtained advantage.” The value of that single word is inexpressibly great.

Why was Ananda unable to resist the mantra “formerly of the Brahma Heaven,” since he had after all reached the first stage of Arhatship? It was because in the past, in cultivating samadhi, he had used his conscious mind. The conscious mind is subject to production and extinction and is not ultimate. A samadhi which is developed by using the thought-processes of the conscious mind, such as the “stop and contemplate” method of the Tyan Tai teaching, involves the eighth consciousness. It does not address the nature which is neither produced nor extinguished. If one bases one’s work on the nature which is neither produced nor extinguished, one can cultivate a samadhi which is neither produced nor extinguished. That is a genuine samadhi, one that cannot be moved by outside forces.

But Ananda used only his conscious mind in whatever he did. For instance, when he listened to Sutras, he used his mind to remember the principles the Buddha spoke. But the conscious mind which remembered the principles cannot lead to the fundamental

solution. So when Ananda encountered a demonic state, he failed to recognize it.

It is essential for people who cultivate the Way to be able to recognize their environment. If you can recognize states when they arise, you won't be influenced by them. They won't move you. Samadhi-power can be victorious over any state whether it be good, bad, agreeable, or disagreeable. In the midst of them all, you can remain "thus, thus, unmoving, completely and eternally bright." That is genuine samadhi-power.

If happy situations make you happy and sad events make you sad, you're being influenced by states. If you keep jumping from joy to anger, to sorrow, to happiness, you're being influenced by states. Not to be influenced by external states is to be like a mirror: when something appears it is reflected, when it passes there is stillness. The basic substance of the mirror is always bright. It cannot be defiled. To have samadhi-power and not to move is to have genuine wisdom, thorough understanding. It is very important to understand this.

"Shamatha" is a Sanskrit word which is interpreted to mean "still and pure." However, it is a stillness and purity which is forced. One attains a kind of samadhi by deliberately forcing the mind to have samadhi-power and not to strike up false thinking. It is not the ultimate samadhi. It is merely a kind of expedient device cultivated by those of the Small Vehicle. At the very beginning of his teaching, Shakyamuni Buddha taught this method to those of the Two Vehicles.

"Samapatti," also Sanskrit, is interpreted to mean "contemplation and illumination" of such dharmas as the twelve causal conditions and the four truths.

"Dhyana," also Sanskrit, is interpreted to mean "thought-cultivation" or "still consideration." One uses the mind to trace the coming and going of thoughts, in much the same way as in the cultivation of "stopping and contemplating." The Tyan Tai School lists three stoppings which relate to the Three Contemplations:

empty, false, and the middle. That teaching is basically a good one, but it is nothing compared to the Shurangama Samadhi. Dhyana can be ultimate or non-ultimate. Those of the Small Vehicle cultivate using the conscious mind; they make discriminations using the conscious mind. Since the conscious mind is subject to production and extinction, its use will not lead to the genuine solid samadhi of the Buddha.

"What should we cultivate?" you wonder.

The Shurangama Samadhi.

"How do we cultivate the Shurangama Samadhi?"

The Sutra text will gradually make that clear. If you attend to the explanation of the Sutra and understand it, you will know how to achieve the Shurangama Samadhi. You won't be left in a daze[7]. At present you don't know where to begin and are like someone standing in a dense forest on the side of a mountain while trying to see what the face of the mountain looks like. As the poet Su Teng P'o put it:

I can't tell what Lu Mountain really looks like
Because I myself am standing on the mountain.

If he had walked away from it, though, he could have seen. Now we are within the Shurangama Samadhi; you are boring your way into the Shurangama Samadhi and if you continue to progress you will gradually come to see it clearly. Then you will know you have obtained a real gem. You'll be able to climb the jeweled mountain, grab two big fistfuls of gold, fill your arms with the gems and go back down the mountain. Even if you continually take from it, the supply will never be exhausted. It will be an endless supply, more than you could ever use in a lifetime. In the future you will be able

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7. The *leng* (楞) of *leng yen* (楞嚴), Shurangama, means "a daze" and is the state a Sangha-member is said to enter when he or she commits the Shurangama Mantra to memory; they are said to be *leng pan nien* (楞半年), "dazed for half a year."

to achieve the Shurangama enlightenment and then go on to teach and transform living beings.

Sutra:

At that time Bodhisattvas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, great Arhats, pratyekas, and others from the ten directions, were also present. Pleased at the opportunity to listen, they withdrew silently to their seats to receive the sagely instruction.

Commentary:

That time is when Ananda asked Shakyamuni Buddha to explain how the Tathagatas of the ten directions had realized Bodhi, that is, Right Enlightenment. It has already been mentioned that **Bodhisattvas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges** were present, so this refers to yet more Bodhisattvas. The Ganges River is miles wide and its sands are as fine as flour, like fine motes of dust. During a storm, the sands and stones fly about, as dangerous as desert dust-storms. Now, how many grains of such fine sand would you estimate there to be in a river some 15 miles wide? Could you figure it? Probably even the best mathematician would be unable to come up with a number. Since the Ganges' sands are unreckonable, they are used to represent a non-existent number, a number beyond all calculations.

A Bodhisattva, an "enlightened being," is also called "a living being with a great Way-mind." No matter how badly people may act towards him, he doesn't hold it against them. He absolutely never becomes irritated, never loses his temper. His Way-mind is firm and vast. A Bodhisattva is also called a "dedicated lord," since he has already resolved to be a Bodhisattva.

The ten directions. The *Amitabha Sutra* speaks of the Buddhas of the six directions, but it does not mention the ten directions. The six are north, east, south, and west, up, and down. The additional four are northeast, southeast, northwest, and southwest. I say, though, that basically there isn't even one direction. The earth is round, so what directions can there be? But the Buddhist Sutras

speak of ten directions, and besides, the “round” I speak of is not yet an established fact; so don’t rely on what I say. As I see it, the world is transformed from a single source; everything is within the Great Light Treasury, the Tathagata Store, where there is no north, south, east, west, or the four intermediate points, or up or down. That is the way I see it, but perhaps it is not right.

There were, not little arhats, but **great Arhats**, whose Way was great. It does not mean that they were physically big, that they were particularly tall. It means that their Dharma-nature was great, the power of their Dharma was great, their cultivation of virtue was great.

Arhat has three meanings:

1. Worthy of offerings.

They were worthy of the offerings of gods and people. In the causal ground a bhikshu “begs for his food” and as a result, as an Arhat, he is “worthy of offerings.”

2. Killer of thieves.

The Buddha taught people not to kill. Isn’t killing a violation of precepts? No, not in this case, because the thieves referred to are not external thieves, but the thieves within you.

“What are the thieves within us?” you wonder.

There are the thieves of ignorance, the thieves of affliction, and the six thieves – the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Unbeknownst to you, they rob you. You don’t realize it, but when your eyes look at things, your essential energies were originally full, but once you start looking at a lot of things the thieves which are your eyes steal your valuable treasures. When you listen to things all the time, then your hearing-nature disperses and your vital energies are stolen away. You shouldn’t say, “My eyes are my best friend and my ears always help me out, my nose smells things and my tongue distinguishes tastes – they are all very helpful.”

No. These six thieves steal your unsurpassed true treasures. They plunder the wealth of your household without your even

realizing it. You've got a thief for a neighbor but don't even realize it; you say, "Don't blame him for stealing my things!" This is a very, very important point I am making. Don't be mistaken and think I am just joking. If you hadn't lost these things, you would have realized Buddhahood long ago. Look into it, think it over. You feel you haven't lost anything? Well, I know that the things you have lost are priceless treasures no money could buy. You've lost them and you still think everything is just fine. "My eyes can see so far – clearer than anyone else's," you say and think that this is good. But the more clearly you see the more essential energy is lost.

At this point you say, "Dharma Master, one of your lectures is more than enough. You haven't said anything that has the least bit of principle to it."

Since you haven't yet understood what I say, of course you are going to think it lacks principle. Wait until you understand and then you will know that what I say is genuine principle.

3. Not born.

Not born, Arhats are also not extinguished; they are not subject to production and extinction. They have attained the patience of the non-production of dharmas. They do not have to undergo birth and death again. That is, they have "done what had to be done and do not undergo any further existence." They will not fall into the three realms, although they haven't attained Anuttarasamyaksambodhi, the unsurpassed proper and equal right enlightenment.

In the *Sutra in Forty-two Sections* the Buddha said,

> *Be careful not to believe your own mind: your mind cannot be believed. Once you have attained Arhatship, then you can believe your own mind.*

"Why can't one believe one's own mind?" you ask.

Because your mind is false thinking, and if you believe false thinking you will do false things; if you do false things, you must undergo a false birth and death. If you don't believe the false

thoughts, if you don’t trust your own mind, then you can avoid the false birth and death.

“When can one believe one’s own mind?”

When you attain the fourth stage of Arhatship you can believe your own mind. Until then you shouldn’t choose to listen to yourself instead of to the advice of a Good and Wise Advisor. The right thing to do is to listen to the instructions of a Good and Wise One.

Pratyekas, Pratyekabuddhas – those Enlightened to Conditions and Solitarily Enlightened Ones – **and others** were also present. **Pleased at the opportunity to listen, they withdrew silently to their seats to receive the sagely instructions**. There were many, many more beings as well, not just one or two, who all wanted to hear the sound of the Dharma the Buddha was speaking, the wonderful sagely instructions, the doctrines of the Holy Ones. They really liked to listen, and they sat silently to one side to hear the Buddha speak.

Chapter 5

The Way to Shamatha

D2 The Tathagata replies about Shamatha.
E1 He explains the wonderful samadhi from beginning to end.
F1 He explains the general name of the Buddha's samadhi causing Ananda to know the causes cultivated and the fruition obtained by all Buddhas.

Sutra:

In the midst of the great assembly, the World Honored One then extended his golden arm, rubbed Ananda's crown, and said to Ananda and the great assembly, "There is a samadhi called the King of the Foremost Shurangama at the Great Buddha's Summit Replete with the Myriad Practices; it is a path wonderfully adorned and the single door through which the Tathagatas of the ten directions gained transcendence. You should now listen attentively." Ananda bowed down to receive the compassionate instruction humbly.

Commentary:

Originally this section appeared later in the text, but the Elder Dharma Master Yuan Ying saw that it did not fit well there and so he moved it to this place. I have also looked into this several times and I agree that this section of text should appear here. It does not seem appropriate in the other place; it does not tie with what proceeds and follows it there. Here it fits in sequence.

Then means when the great Arhats and the Great Bodhisattvas as many as the sands in the Ganges River had all assembled from the ten directions, wishing to receive the sagely instruction, and when Ananda had implored the Buddha to explain the initial expedients of cultivation by which the Tathagatas of the ten directions had attained wonderful shamatha, wonderful samapatti, and wonderful dhyana: it was then that **the World Honored One extended his golden arm** and **rubbed Ananda's crown**.

The Buddha's arm was naturally golden; it isn't that he had gilded it. In Buddhism, rubbing the crown of the head represents compassionate loving protection for living beings. Now the Buddha, too, speaks of love, but this is not the ordinary love; rather it is a compassionate, universally pervasive love which protects all beings and causes all their demon-obstacles to disappear. It is not the selfish, emotional love which most people refer to. Take careful note of this point.

Of all the kinds of love in the world, the strongest is parents' love for their children. No matter how bad a child may act toward his parents, they'll still forgive him. "He's just a child," they'll say. "He doesn't understand things." Even when a small child strikes his father or scolds his mother, the parents simply regard it with amusement, and don't feel that he has done anything wrong.

"Why are parents like that?" you ask.

Because they love their children so much. The love of parents for their children is deeper and fiercer than the love between husband and wife.

I admire Americans in this respect. By the time their children are eighteen years old they are allowed to stand on their own. Sometimes parents don't pay any attention to them after that age. That is fine; it is very good to raise sons and daughters to be independent of their parents. The only problem is that the children are often not experienced enough at that age to exercise mature judgement and so they easily get off to a wrong start. They are easily blown over by the winds of current trends or are pulled into

the water by friends who are not upright, and once they have landed in the water it is not easy for them to get back out by themselves. As a result, at the present time in America there are many young people who don't recognize their country, who don't know the meaning of a home, even to the point that they don't even know what they themselves are all about. From morning to night they take LSD, marijuana and other drugs until they lose all clarity and are totally confused from dawn to dusk. If you ask them what they do for their country they say, "What does it have to do with me?" If you inquire about their family they say, "I don't have any." You might say they have left home, and yet of course they haven't, although they claim to have no home. They're caught in a total vacuum and that to me is most pitiful.

The Buddha's loving protection for all living beings is like that of parents for their children yet stronger. Rubbing the crown is an expression of that loving protection. Just as an acupuncture needle revitalizes your blood and energy, so, as he rubs your crown, the Buddha's hand emits light which dispels all the darkness within you. In this way he relieves you of all evil and increases your good roots.

"I've missed the opportunity," you lament. "If only I had been born when the Buddha was in the world, I could have asked the Buddha to rub my crown so my evil would be eradicated and my good roots increased."

Who told you not to be born at the time when the Buddha was in the world? Who told you to be born now? You can't blame anyone but yourself. And regret is of no use. Don't be regretful. You can't blame other people. You can't blame heaven. And you can't blame the Buddha. We have been born now, so now we should study the Buddhadharma. If we are sincere enough the Buddha will be moved and will come and rub our crowns in expression of his loving protection. Although the Buddha has entered Nirvana, his pure Dharmabody pervades all places. You should not think that the Buddha has left us. The Buddha is always with us; it's just that we

cannot see him. All our daily activities – walking, standing, sitting, lying down, eating, getting dressed – take place within the Buddha's Dharma-body. So we are always with the Buddha. It is just that the eyes of ordinary people haven't the spiritual penetration to see the Buddha.

The Buddha rubbed Ananda's crown **and said to Ananda and the great assembly, "There is a samadhi called The King of the Foremost Shurangama at the Great Buddha's Summit Replete with the Myriad Practices; it is a path wonderfully adorned and the single door through which the Tathagatas of the ten directions gained transcendence."** Not only Ananda but everyone in the great assembly as well – the great bhikshus, great Bodhisattvas, the king, elders, and laypeople – was instructed by the Buddha in the "ultimately durable" king of samadhis, which includes within it all the samadhis of all the myriad methods of cultivation. All Buddhas of all places have reached Buddhahood along this wonderful, splendid path and through this one door.

You should now listen attentively. "Listen carefully. Pay attention," the Buddha told Ananda. "Don't be nonchalant when you listen to me speak Sutras. Take all of your essential energy and pour it into your ears. Don't strike up false thoughts. Don't sit there during the Sutra lecture and be thinking about running out on the streets to see what is happening."

Ananda bowed down to receive the compassionate instruction humbly. When Ananda heard the Buddha say that, he stood up and then bowed, and humbly awaited the holy teaching. He remained kneeling ready to listen to what the Buddha was about to say about the Shurangama, the King of Samadhis.

F2 He explains the path of Shamatha, causing Ananda to awaken to the secret cause and have a great blossoming forth of complete understanding.
G1 He destroys upside-down thinking by speaking of the empty Tathagata store.
H1 The Tathagata smashes the false and reveals the true.
I1 He casts out and destroys the false mind to which Ananda attaches by opening the way to Shamatha.
J1 He establishes that Ananda grasps at the mind.
K1 He asks him about his resolve based on grasping at the appearance he saw.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "You and I are of the same family and share the affection of a natural relationship. At the time of your initial resolve, what were the outstanding characteristics which you saw in my Dharma that caused you to suddenly cast aside the deep kindness and love found in the world?"

Commentary:

Ananda waited humbly to receive the Buddha's compassionate instruction. But first the Buddha questioned him about his reasons for leaving the home-life.

The Buddha said to Ananda, "You and I are of the same family and share the affection of a natural relationship." Ananda and the Buddha were paternal first cousins. The Buddha was saying, "You and I are like brothers." One speaks of the "affection of a natural relationship" because in the world, natural relationships take precedent over everything else. Such relationships form a natural cycle. After being a son or daughter you become a father or mother and then you become a grandfather or grandmother, and if you are filial to your father and mother, your children will be filial to you. If you aren't filial to your parents, your sons and daughters won't be filial to you. It is said:

Of all the kinds of good practices
Filial piety is the first.
Of all the myriad evils,
Licentiousness is the worst.

In China, filial feeling is considered the root of goodness, its most fundamental form. There are twenty-four paragons of filial virtue in Chinese history, among whom some of the most notable were T'an Hsiang, Meng Chung, and Wang Hsiang.

T'an Hsiang's father and mother were sick and wanted some sweet melon to eat, of a kind grown in Northern China. However, it was winter and the snow was heavy on the ground, so how could there be any melons? T'an Hsiang planted a melon seed in the frozen earth, stretched out on top of it to warm the ground, and began to cry. "How can I get this melon to grow quickly so I can harvest it for my parents?" he lamented. He cried and cried until suddenly something very strange happened. It's not certain whether it was a response evoked from a Bodhisattva or from a Buddha or from a ghost or spirit, but right then and there a melon grew, blossomed, and bore fruit for T'an Hsiang to harvest and carry home to his parents, a miraculous response to his one true thought of sincere filial regard. So it's said, "T'an Hsiang cried for melons."

Meng Chung's parents wanted some bamboo shoots to eat, and unable to find any, he began to weep. He wept until he suddenly saw tender bamboo shoot sprouting in the spots where his tears had fallen. Such strange events are incomprehensible. Don't try to use your thinking mind to figure them out. "Meng Chung's tears sprouted the bamboo."

In the dead of winter, Wang Hsiang's parents both fell ill and wanted some carp to eat. Wang Hsiang didn't have any money to buy fish, and all the waters were frozen over, so he opened his clothing and lay down on the ice. In Northern China the ice gets very thick in the winter, but his warm skin melted the ice through. It was his plan to fish for a carp through the hole, but suddenly a carp jumped out of the hole all by itself. Wang Hsiang hurried home with it and told his parents what had happened. "We won't eat the carp," his parents decided, "because it is probably the son or grandson of the Dragon King who sent it to us." Although they

didn't eat the carp, their illness was cured nevertheless. "Wang Hsiang lay down to catch a carp."

True filial conduct can move heaven. Sons and daughters should pay particular attention to the practice of filial piety. The great Emperor Shun of China was so filial that elephants were moved to plow for him and birds did his weeding.

At the time of your initial resolve, what were the outstanding characteristics which you saw in my Dharma that caused you to suddenly cast aside the deep kindness and love found in the world? The Buddha asked Ananda what first made him decide to renounce worldly love and leave the home-life; what good states of mind did he experience that led to his resolve.

In this world the kindness of parents is very great and the love between couples is particularly intense. If people could transform the love which exists between married couples into love for the study and practice of the Buddhadharma, then there wouldn't be anyone who didn't realize Buddhahood. Unfortunately, most people can't do that. If you can, that is inconceivably fine.

What made Ananda pay no further attention to his parent's deep kindness or his wife's emotional love? What made him totally disregard everything except following the Buddha and leaving the home-life?

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "I saw the Tathagata' s thirty-two characteristics, which were so supremely wonderful, so incomparable, that his entire body had a shimmering transparence just like that of crystal.

Commentary:

"Speak up! Quickly!" the Buddha said. "Don't think about it, just tell me straight out about what made you decide to leave home."

Since he was supposed to speak plainly, **Ananda said to the Buddha, "I saw the Tathagata's thirty-two characteristics."**

From the invisible crown on the top of his head down to his level, well-proportioned feet, thirty-two major and eighty minor characteristics adorn the Buddha's body.

"These thirty-two characteristics were **so supremely wonderful, so incomparable**, finer than anything I'd ever seen," Ananda said. "Nothing in the world can compare to the wondrous adornment of your appearance, Buddha."

The Buddha's Reward-body, **his entire body had a shimmering transparence just like that of crystal**.

Sutra:

"I often thought to myself that these characteristics cannot be born of desire and love. Why? The vapors of desire are coarse and murky. From foul and putrid intercourse comes a turbid mixture of pus and blood which cannot give off such a magnificent, pure, and brilliant concentration of purple-golden light. And so I thirstily gazed upward, followed the Buddha, and let the hair fall from my head."

Commentary:

When Ananda **often thought to** himself **that these characteristics cannot be born of desire and love**, he used his ordinary discriminating consciousness, his ordinary mind which is subject to production and extinction. How, he thought, could the thirty-two special characteristics of the Buddha be born from emotional, lustful, desire and thoughts of love? **The vapors of desire are coarse and murky. From foul and putrid intercourse comes a turbid mixture of pus and blood.** Men and women have intercourse and think it is good, but it actually gives off vapors which are extremely rancid. We can't rely on our bodies born from the desire of men and women to **give off such a magnificent, pure, and brilliant concentration of purple-golden light**, the color of distant mountains, which constantly illumines the Buddha's body.

Thinking this, Ananda **thirstily gazed upward, followed the Buddha, and let the hair fall from** his **head**. Ananda forsook one

kind of love, his emotional love for his family, and took up another kind: he fell in love with the Buddha's appearance. And that is the reason Ananda left the home-life.

Right here is where Ananda made his mistake. He didn't leave home out of a genuine desire to cultivate the Way and after he left home he concentrated too heavily on studying the Sutras. Earlier, I said that you should change the love which exists between married couples into a love for the Buddhadharma. But that doesn't mean that merely by love alone you can put an end to birth and death.

"What must be done?" you ask.

You need to genuinely cultivate the Way. You have to be mindful of what you are doing at all times and in all places. You must never forget for even a moment to practice and uphold the Buddhadharma. Early in the morning and late at night you should be studying the *Shurangama Sutra*, sitting in meditation, and listening to the Sutra lectures. Don't have false thinking and don't talk so much, since neither can help you at all in your study of the Sutra or your investigation of Ch'an. You should stake your very lives on the work and sacrifice everything else in order to study Buddhism. Then the understanding you gain will enable you to be genuinely wise and truly intelligent.

But since Ananda was solely concerned with loving the Buddha, he didn't cultivate samadhi. He thought (as he confesses in the text), "The Buddha is my older cousin. When the time comes the Buddha will give me samadhi power." He didn't realize that no one could stand in for him, in body or in mind. Ananda was very intelligent, probably more intelligent than any of us, but when he concentrated on studying the Sutras at the expense of cultivating samadhi, he was too smart for his own good. He mastered the words but not the substance. He could remember all the Dharma the Buddha had spoken and never got one word of it wrong, but without any samadhi-power, he fell under the spell of the "Brahma Heaven" mantra of Matangi's daughter.

Instead of imitating the Buddha's wisdom, his awakening, and his Way-virtue, Ananda just modeled himself on the Buddha's appearance. In past lives he was probably attached to appearances, and so he concentrated on the superficial aspect of things. Although he remembered the Sutras the Buddha spoke, he didn't pay a lot of attention to what they said. He was more concerned with the Buddha's appearance to the point that if on any given day he just saw the Buddha, that was enough to make him happy.

Anyone who wants to obtain genuine samadhi power must first cast love aside. But to replace love with hate is another mistake. "I don't love anything," you say. "I despise whoever I see. Stay away from me! I want to be alone. I want to cultivate by myself." With this attitude, you'll never obtain samadhi. You must neither hate nor love. It should be as if there were no difference between you and other people. Everyone is equal. If you are one with and equal to other people, who is there to love? Who is there to hate? No one.

"I can't manage that," you say. "That's hard work."

If you can work hard, then you can obtain what is true. If you don't work hard, you won't obtain it. Follow the teachings, and don't listen to your own thoughts about it. The ordinary mind is the Way.

Because Ananda liked the Buddha's adorned appearance, he was able to reject the deep compulsion for worldly kindness and love and let the hair fall from his head. When the Buddha was in the world, those who left home under him did not have to shave their heads. The Buddha simply said, "Good man, you are now renouncing worldly life and leaving home. Let your beard and hair fall of itself and let you be robed in the kashaya." As soon as the Buddha said this the bhikshu's hair and beard would fall out, because the Buddha used his spiritual penetrations to cause it to fall. Now that the Buddha has entered Nirvana we have to receive the precepts at a precept-platform, but when the Buddha was in the world one became possessed of the precept substance when he spoke those few words, and one was robed in the precept sash.

In China the precept-platform used to be three years long. But three years eventually proved too long, so a scientific method was adopted to speed up the process so that one could receive the precepts in fifty-three days. Now some places transmit the precepts in eighteen days, and there are even places that will do it in a week. Now from mechanization we've advanced to electronics, to the point that in Hong Kong on Ta Yu Mountain there are places where the precepts are transmitted in three days' time. Actually, a three-day precept-platform is not in accord with Dharma.

K2 He points out that all living beings have a misconception.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "Very good, Ananda. You should all know that all living beings are continually born and continually die, simply because they do not know the everlasting true mind, the bright substance of the pure nature. Instead they engage in false thinking. It has been so since time without beginning. Their thoughts are not true, and so the wheel keeps turning.

Commentary:

The Buddha said, "Very good, Ananda." The Buddha encourages Ananda, telling him he has done a very good thing to resolve to become a bhikshu. Then he addresses the entire assembly, the great bhikshus, great Arhats, great Bodhisattvas, and all the people present, saying that they **should all know that all living beings are continually born and continually die –** birth and death are undergone in a continuous succession which never ceases, and we leave behind a pile of bones as large as a mountain. Birth and death; death and birth; birth and death. Where did you come from, and where are you going? You don't know. You are dragged about by your karmic conditions, your karmic obstacles. Where will you be born next? Where were you before? You don't even know how you got here and you don't know where you will go after you die.

"Why is there birth and death?" you ask.

Because you don't understand, **do not know the everlasting true mind** which does not move or waver, which is not produced or extinguished, which is not defiled or pure, and to which there is nothing added or taken away. Because this mind does not move or waver it is called "everlasting." Because there is nothing to be added or taken away from it, it is called "true."

Merely to know of the true mind is not enough; you must also recognize **the bright substance of the pure nature**. This is your own self-nature, your Dharma-nature. It is clear and pure, and its brilliance pervades and illumines everything everywhere. But you aren't aware of it; you've forgotten it. It is like a bright pearl hidden in your clothing.

The *Dharma Flower Sutra* tells of a wealthy man whose son was unhappy at home and ran away. But just before he left, his parents, who feared their son would end up penniless and become a vagrant sleeping in the streets, secretly sewed a pearl that grants all wishes into the youth's clothing. The son left, and as predicted soon ended up a drifter. But he didn't realize that a priceless pearl was sewn in his clothing, so he couldn't take advantage of the benefit it would provide him. The bright substance of your everlasting pure nature, your true, unchanging mind, is like the youth's priceless pearl: since you are unaware of it, you can't use it to good advantage. **Instead** you **engage in false thinking. It has been so since time without beginning**. You use the conscious mind, which is subject to production and extinction. Its **thoughts are not true**, but it takes control of you and makes you murky and confused; it spins you around and pulls you into the mire. Since your actions are based on it, **the wheel keeps turning** in a perpetual cycle of birth and death. But if your false thinking is cast out and exhausted once and for all and no more is produced, and you recognize your true mind, your births and deaths will cease.

The False Consciousness is Without a Location

J2 He actually destroys the false mind.
K1 The Tathagata thoroughly refutes three points of confusion.
L1 His refutation that the false consciousness is without a location.
M1 He instructs that Ananda should reply to the teaching with a straightforward mind.

Sutra:

"Now you wish to investigate the unsurpassed Bodhi and actually discover your nature. You should answer my questions with a straightforward mind, because that is exactly the way the Tathagatas of the ten directions escaped birth and death. Their minds were all straightforward, and since their minds and words were consistently that way, from the beginning, through the intermediate stages to the end, they were never in the least evasive.

Commentary:

The *Vimilakirti Sutra* says, "The straightforward mind is the field of enlightenment." And thus the Buddha instructs Ananda, **"Now you wish to investigate the unsurpassed Bodhi and actually discover your nature. You should answer my questions with a straightforward mind."** "Don't think about it," he says, "don't use false thinking to try to figure out how to answer me correctly. Don't approach it as if you were in combat with me and must figure out what maneuver you should make to defeat me, as if this were the martial arts where one must decide how to counter-

attack." The Buddha was concerned that if Ananda tried to answer in a roundabout manner, it would be impossible to arrive at true principle.

Why is the straightforward mind the field of enlightenment? At the point when you have not yet given rise to a first thought, that is your true mind, your Way-mind. This is the state of "primary thought," the primary truth that exists prior to the spoken word. As soon as you begin thinking that is to say, as soon as you strike up false thinking, it is no longer your true mind at work. It is your conscious mind which is full of "second thoughts." Instead of speaking up directly, and using your straightforward mind to express yourself, you start thinking about it: "Ah, I shouldn't say that; if I say that I'll be wrong. I should say this." But then you think about it again and change your mind again.

When you speak, use your primary thought. Why? **Because that is exactly the way the Tathagatas of the ten directions escaped birth and death.** There is a verse about the Chinese character *hsin* (心), "mind," which goes:

> *Three small dots like a cluster of stars,*
> *And a hook shaped like a crescent moon.*
> *Beget animals with fur and horns,*
> *Yet perfection of Buddhahood comes from it too.*

The ten Dharmarealms are not beyond a single thought of the mind. Your thoughts can send you not only into the animal realm, but into Buddhahood as well. Not only are Buddhas made from the mind, ghosts are creations of the mind, and so are gods, Arhats, and Bodhisattvas. For instance, you are now studying the Buddhadharma, investigating the *Shurangama Sutra* without fear of whatever difficulties may arise. This is because you repeatedly planted a single indestructible seed of thought into the field of your mind in countless former lives. A Bodhi-seed has taken root so that now you are studying the Buddhadharma. Of course this single thought of the true mind has been helped along by the conscious

mind, which thought over and over, "Should I study the Buddhadharma or not?" You kept sawing the issue back and forth until finally you cut through it.

Their minds were all straightforward, and since their minds and words were consistently that way. The Chinese characters *ju shih* (如是) "that way" refer specifically to the straightforward mind and do not have the same meaning as when they occurred in the opening sentence of the Sutra where *ju shih* means "thus" in "Thus I have heard."

From the beginning, through the intermediate stages to the end. "The end" refers to wonderful enlightenment, the achievement of Buddhahood. "The beginning" refers to the stage of dry wisdom, which precedes the Ten Faiths. These positions will be discussed later in the text. "The intermediate stages" are the long period of cultivation between the stage of dry wisdom and the achievement of Buddhahood, through the various stages of Bodhisattvahood to equal enlightenment and then wonderful enlightenment. Through all that time the Buddhas of the past **were never in the least evasive** and used only their straightforward minds. And so they became Buddhas.

Ananda would not use his straight mind to answer the questions, but would answer in round-about ways, making it impossible to arrive at any true principles. So the Buddha first wanted to explain to him clearly that he should give straight answers and not be muddled about it. "Now I am speaking essential Dharma-doors for you," said the Buddha, "I'm explaining how to actually discover your nature, the initial doctrines concerning the realization of Buddhahood, so you can't be casual or do a lot of hedging when you answer me. You must use your straightforward mind to answer me."

M2 He asks Ananda about his ability to see and his ability to love.

Sutra:

"Ananda, I now ask you: at the time of your initial resolve, which arose in response to the Tathagata's thirty-two characteristics, what was it that saw those characteristics and who delighted in them?"

Commentary:

The Buddha again questions Ananda, **"Ananda, I now ask you: at the time of your initial resolve."** In making his decision to cultivate the Way, when Ananda used his conscious mind to think about the Buddha's appearance, **the Tathagata's thirty-two characteristics,** Ananda was taking advantage of the situation. This is the meaning of **in response to**. So the Buddha asks, **"What was it that saw those characteristics and who delighted in them?"**

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, this is the way I experienced the delight: I used my mind and eyes. Because my eyes saw the Tathagata's outstanding characteristics, my mind gave rise to delight. That is why I became resolved and wished to removed myself from birth and death."

Commentary:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, this is the way I experienced the delight: I used my mind and eyes." Most people would say that this was correct, that he used his eyes and mind to see the Buddha. But as the Sutra text continues you will come to find out this is a mistake.

Because my eyes saw the Tathagata's outstanding characteristics, my mind gave rise to delight. I used my eyes to look at the Buddha's thirty-two major and eighty minor characteristics and in my mind love arose. What was it I loved? I saw the Buddha's characteristics and adornments were immaculately pure, not at all filthy like bodies born from love and desire. **That is why I became**

resolved and wished to removed myself from birth and death. I wanted to follow the Buddha, leave the home-life, and cultivate the Way. The history of my leaving home is like that." That is how he answered Shakyamuni Buddha's question.

M3 He asks Ananda where his mind and eyes are.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "It is as you say, that experience of delight actually occurs because of your mind and eyes. If you do not know where your mind and eyes are, you will not be able to conquer the wearisome dust.

Commentary:

Ananda told the Buddha that the reason he decided to leave the home-life was because he saw the Buddha's supreme characteristics and in his mind he loved them.

The Buddha said to Ananda, "It is as you say, that experience of delight actually occurs because of your mind and eyes." Nonetheless, do you know where your mind is? Do you know if your eyes have the ability to see? Do you know where your eyes are?

"Those kind of questions are totally senseless," you object. "His eyes were in his face and his mind in his body. Anybody knows that."

But that's not your true mind. Nor is that genuine seeing. Behind the Buddha's questions lies the wisdom of the Tathagata. **If you do not know where your mind and eyes are, you will not be able to conquer the wearisome dust.** The "dust" means defilement, and "wearisome" means disturbing. The dust disturbs your mind, and it troubles your nature, so that you can't change your false thinking into your true mind. It's just as when two armies clash, and one becomes the victor. You are the victor if you are able to conquer the dust, that is, if you are able to cut off the road to birth and death.

Sutra:

"For example, when a king's country is invaded by thieves and he sends out his troops to suppress and banish them, the troops must know where the thieves are.

Commentary:

The Buddha then presents an analogy: "**For example, when a king's country is invaded by thieves** who wish to seize the land, **he sends out his troops to suppress and banish them,** to quell them and drive them out. But the troops he sends **must know where the thieves are.**" In the same way, the reason you cannot put an end to the beginningless eons of birth and death is because you do not know where your mind and eyes are.

Sutra:

"It is the fault of your mind and eyes that you flow and turn. I am now asking you specifically about your mind and eyes: where are they now?"

Commentary:

The more the Buddha says the less principle there is in it! "I will tell you further that **it is the fault of your mind and eyes that you flow and turn**. Why do you get born and die? What causes you to flow and turn in birth and death, revolving endlessly on the turning wheel of the six paths? Your mind and eyes are to blame. Your mind and eyes are at fault for making you undergo birth and death and rendering you incapable of obtaining liberation. Since they are to blame, **I am now asking you specifically about your mind and eyes: where are they now?** Speak up quickly!" The Buddha exhorts Ananda.

M4 The seven places which are attached to are all non-existent.
N1 Ananda attaches to the mind as being in the body.
O1 Ananda brings up the ten kinds of beings as all alike reckoning the mind as inside.

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, all the ten kinds of living beings in the world alike maintain that the

conscious mind dwells within the body; and as I regard the Tathagata's blue lotus-flower eyes, they too are on the Buddha's face.

Commentary:

In this section of the text Ananda has not answered with a straightforward mind. He's being evasive. When Ananda was asked by the Buddha, "Where is your mind? Where are your eyes?" he was at a loss and didn't know what the best answer was. Still, he had to speak, so he sized up the situation and said, **"World Honored One."** I believe at this point Ananda was speaking in a very soft voice. Why? Because he wasn't sure of himself. He didn't know if he was right or not. He just guessed based on what he knew; he was hesitant, on the verge of speaking and yet not daring to do so.

He brought up **all the ten kinds of living beings**. These will be discussed later so we will not explain them here. They include those born from wombs, those born from eggs, those born from moisture, those born by transformation, those with thought, and so forth as listed in the Vajra Sutra. Basically, there are twelve kinds of living beings, but here the kind without form and the kind without thought are omitted.

So Ananda said in a soft voice, "All of the ten kinds of living beings **in the world alike maintain that the conscious mind dwells within the body**." The "conscious mind" is the mind subject to birth and death, the discriminating, calculating mind. Ananda doesn't mention himself. He talks about the ten kinds of living beings. He didn't talk about himself for fear he might somehow be different from other living beings. So he says, "All the ten kinds of living beings are like that, it's not just I, Ananda, alone, who am that way." There was a bit of condescension in his tone, implying, "After all, everyone knows that the mind is inside."

"**And as I regard the Tathagata's blue lotus-flower eyes, they too are on the Buddha's face.** As I lean forward and scrutinize the Thus Come One's eyes, so bright and wide that they

resemble lotus flowers, they are on the Buddha's face," Ananda says. His remark was also subtly implying: "Plain as can be, your eyes are on your face; why do you still have to ask me?" But he didn't dare actually come out and say that.

Sutra:

"I now observe that these prominent organs, four kinds of defiling objects, are on my face, and so, too, my conscious mind actually is within my body."

Commentary:

Ananda said, "World Honored One, your blue lotus-flower eyes are on your face. **I now observe that these prominent organs, four kinds of defiling objects, are on my face.**" The "prominent organs" refer to the eyes, ears, nose, and tongue, all of which are located on the face. They are quite distinct and visible. "**And so, too, my conscious mind actually is within my body.**" As I now think about it further, my discriminating conscious mind which can know pleasant and unpleasant, good and bad, is actually in my body." That is how Ananda answered the Buddha's question.

O2 The Tathagata uses not seeing inside the body to refute this.
P1 The Tathagata brings up an example.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "You are now sitting in the Tathagata's lecture hall looking at the Jeta Grove. Where is it at present?"

"World Honored One, this great many-storied pure lecture hall is in the Garden of the Benefactor of the Solitary. At present the Jeta Grove is in fact outside the hall."

Commentary:

Having heard Ananda's answer that his mind was in his body and his eyes were on his face, the Buddha initially did not make any direct reply. Instead, the Buddha asked Ananda another question.

The Buddha said to Ananda, "You are now sitting in the Tathagata's lecture hall looking at the Jeta Grove. As you gaze at Prince War Victor's grove, **where is it at present?"** The Buddha didn't give any indication whether the mind is indeed inside or outside. He just fired another question back at Ananda in order to combat Ananda's thought process.

Ananda answered the Buddha, "**World Honored One, this great many-storied pure lecture hall is in the Garden of the Benefactor of the Solitary.** The Buddha's large, pure and clean lecture hall is in the garden of the Elder Anathapindaka. **At present the Jeta Grove is in fact outside the hall.** The pure lecture hall, the place where we all are, is in the Garden. Prince Jeta's grove is actually outside the hall."

The Buddha then said to him:

Sutra:

"Ananda, as you are now in the hall, what do you see first?"

"World Honored One, here in the hall I first see the Tathagata, next I see the great assembly, and from there, as I gaze outward, I see the grove and garden."

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha heard Ananda say his external organs, his eyes, ears, nose, and tongue, the four defiling objects, forms, sounds, smells, and tastes are outside of him, while his conscious mind is in his body. The Buddha then asked him where the Jeta Grove was. Now the Buddha asked, **"Ananda, as you are now in the hall, what do you see first?"** Ananda has said his mind was in his body, and so the Buddha asked him what he saw first when he was in the hall.

Ananda answered, "**World Honored One, here in the hall I first see the Tathagata.** The first thing I see when I'm in the lecture hall is the Buddha," he replied, "You, World Honored One."

"**Next I see the great assembly.** After that I see the great Bodhisattvas, great Arhats, and the Sound-Hearers. **And from**

there, as I gaze outward, I see the grove and garden. I see the Jeta Grove and the Garden of the Benefactor of Orphans and the Solitary."

Sutra:

"Ananda, why it is you are able to see the grove and the garden as you look at them?"

"World Honored One, since the doors and windows of this great lecture hall have been thrown open wide, I can be in the hall and see into the distance."

Commentary:

The Buddha continued, "**Ananda, why it is you are able to see the grove and the garden as you look at them?** How can you see them? What's the reason you are able to see them?"

"Each time the Buddha seems to speak with less and less principle," you say.

But within what he says is deep meaning. As we investigate more deeply, you will come to realize it.

Ananda answered, "**World Honored One, since the doors and windows of this great lecture hall have been thrown open wide, I can be in the hall and see into the distance.** From inside I can see the Jeta Grove and the Garden of the Benefactor of Orphans and the Solitary."

P2 The place where the text originally was.
P3 The Tathagata questions him about the example.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "It is as you say. When one is in the lecture hall and the doors and windows are open wide, one can see far into the garden and grove. Could there be someone in the hall who does not see the Tathagata and yet sees outside the hall?"

Ananda answered: "World Honored One, to be in the hall and not see the Tathagata, and yet see the grove and fountains is impossible."

"Ananda, you are like that too.

Commentary:

In this section of text the Buddha sets up a question to come back on Ananda. **The Buddha said to Ananda, "It is as you say. When one is in the lecture hall and the doors and windows are open wide, one can see far into the garden and grove.** You are absolutely right. You are inside now and yet you can see the Jeta Grove and the Garden of Anathapindaka. **Could there be someone in the hall who does not see the Tathagata and yet sees outside the hall?** Could there be a living being who doesn't see the Thus Come One, but sees only the grove and garden outside the hall? Is this possible?**"** the Buddha asked.

Ananda answered, "World Honored One, to be in the hall and not see the Tathagata, and yet see the grove and fountains is impossible. If someone were inside,**"** Ananda says, "he certainly would be able to see the Buddha. There's no way he could see what's outside the hall and not see the Buddha, who's inside the hall."

Ananda's answer was very decisive.

"Ananda, you are like that too," the Buddha replied. Ananda said it was impossible to be inside and not see the Buddha inside, and the Buddha proceeds to tell Ananda that Ananda himself is just like someone inside the hall who can't see the Buddha, but can only see outside the hall.

P4 From that example comes the refutation.

Sutra:

"Your mind is capable of understanding everything thoroughly. Now if your present mind, which thoroughly understands everything, were in your body, then you should be

aware first of what is inside your body. Can there be living beings who first see inside their bodies before they observe things outside?

Commentary:

It is said that people are the most capable among the myriad things, and that of all their attributes their minds are the most capable. However, **your mind** which **is capable of understanding everything thoroughly** refers only to the conscious mind. **Now if your present mind, which thoroughly understands everything, were in your body, then you should be aware first of what is inside your body.** The Buddha argues that if Ananda's mind is really inside his body, as Ananda says, then he ought to be able to know first of all what the inside of his body is like, in the same way that someone inside the lecture hall is able to see the people inside. "But **can there be living beings who first see inside their bodies before they observe things outside?**" the Buddha asks. The Buddha knew that Ananda had not yet understood, and that he still did not know what the basic substance of the true mind is like. He was still adroitly making use of his false-thinking mind, his conscious mind. So the Buddha continues his explanation:

Sutra:

"Even if you cannot see your heart, liver, spleen, and stomach, still, the growing of your nails and hair, the twist of your sinews, and the throb of your pulse should be clearly understood. Why don't you perceive these things? If you cannot perceive what is inside at all, how can you perceive what is outside?

Commentary:

"You say your mind is in your body, and your power of seeing is in your eyes," the Buddha tells Ananda. But if your mind, with its power to know, is inside, you should know what your **heart, liver, spleen, and stomach** are like. **Even if you cannot see** them, you should be able to perceive things that are happening on the surface like **the growing of your nails and hair**. You should be able to

know how many fractions of an inch they grow each second. In fact, **the twist of your sinews, and the throb of your pulse should be clearly understood.** You should know all about them. **Why don't you perceive these things?** Why don't you know?

If you cannot perceive what is inside at all, how can you perceive what is outside? Your mind is inside and you don't know what's going on inside you. So how could you know what is going on outside?

P5 The concluding refutation.

Sutra:

"Therefore you should know that you state the impossible when you say that the aware and knowing mind is in the body."

Commentary:

"Your argument won't stand," the Buddha tells Ananda. "Since you can't perceive what is inside you, **therefore you should know that you state the impossible when you say that the aware and knowing mind is in the body**." After using various analogies and arguments, the Buddha tells Ananda directly that it is wrong to place the considering, thinking, knowing mind inside the body.

N2 Ananda attaches to the mind as being outside the body.
O1 Ananda presents the analogy of the lamp and determines it is the same as the Buddha's meaning.

Sutra:

Ananda bowed his head and said to the Buddha, "Upon hearing such a Dharma-sound as the Tathagata has proclaimed, I realize that my mind is actually outside my body.

Commentary:

Ananda's argument that the mind is inside the body did not hold up. Shakyamuni Buddha jolted him out of his folly and destroyed his position. And so **Ananda**, who was well versed in etiquette, **bowed his head**, which means he prostrated himself, **and said to the Buddha, "Upon hearing such a Dharma-sound as the**

Tathagata has proclaimed, I realize that my mind is actually outside my body.” “My mind is not in my body! It has run outside. I’m sure that’s where it is!” exclaims Ananda. One doesn’t know when his mind ran outside, but now he suddenly says that’s where it is.

Sutra:

“Why? For example, a lamp alight in a room will certainly illumine the inside of the room first, and only then will it pour through the doorway to reach the recesses of the hall. For all living beings who do not see within their bodies but only see outside them, it is as if the lighted lamp were placed outside the room, so that it cannot illumine the room.

Commentary:

“**Why?** Why do I say my mind has run outside? **For example, a lamp alight in a room will certainly illumine the inside of the room first, and only then will it pour through the doorway to reach the recesses of the hall.** If my mind were inside,” Ananda reasons, “I would certainly be able to see what is happening inside my body, in the same way that a lamp inside a room will certainly light up the room.

“For all living beings who do not see within their bodies but only see outside them, it is as if the lighted lamp were placed outside the room, so that it cannot illumine the room.” The Buddha pointed out that one cannot see one’s heart, liver, spleen, and stomach, and so Ananda concludes that the mind is outside, just like the lighted lamp outside the room. It is outside so one cannot see things inside.

Sutra:

“This principle is certainly clear: it is absolutely beyond all doubt and exactly the Buddha’s entire meaning, and so it isn’t wrong is it?”

Commentary:

"**This principle is certainly clear.** This doctrine I have presented is certainly correct," Ananda states emphatically. **"It is absolutely beyond all doubt."** Ananda passes judgement in advance. There's no question about it; it is **exactly the Buddha's entire meaning**. "My argument is the same as the Buddha's complete meaning. I couldn't make a mistake. It isn't just my idea. I believe the Buddha will agree, won't he? **It isn't wrong is it?**" In fact, Ananda is still not positive. "I'm pretty sure this is not wrong."

O2 The Tathagata refutes by using the mutual awareness of body and mind.
P1 The analogy makes clear there would be no connection.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "All these bhikshus who just followed me to the city of Shravasti to beg in sequence for food have returned to the Jeta Grove and are rolling their food into balls as they eat. I have already finished eating, but consider the bhikshus: when one person eats, does everyone get full?"

Ananda answered, "No, World Honored One. Why? These bhikshus are Arhats, but their individual lives differ. How could one person's eating cause everyone to be full?"

Commentary:

Ananda felt certain that the Buddha would agree that the mind is outside. Who would have suspected that the Buddha wouldn't even consider the proposal? **The Buddha said to Ananda, "All these bhikshus who just followed me to the city of Shravasti to beg in sequence for food have returned to the Jeta Grove and are rolling their food into balls as they eat."** They begged from house to house and then returned to the grove of trees donated by Prince Jeta. In India they ate by picking up pieces of food in their hands and rolling them into balls, and so this is how the Buddha and his disciples ate. In present-day Burma, bowls are used, but those who have left the home-life still eat their vegetables and rice with their right hand, without using a spoon or chopsticks. They take a

piece of food in their hand and roll it over and over. Then they eat it. Eating this way is very appetizing to them, though whether it is ultimately very appetizing I don't know, since I've never tried it.

"I have already finished eating, but consider the bhikshus: when one person eats, does everyone get full?" I have eaten my fill, but take a look at the assembly: some bhikshus have not finished eating. Now if just one person eats, can the rest get full?

If there is any doubt about this principle, we can try it out ourselves tomorrow. Just serve me food, and all of you can look on while I eat, and you can see if you get full. That will prove the principle found in the Sutra.

Ananda answered, "No, World Honored One. Why?" Having answered in the negative, Ananda was afraid the Buddha might not understand, so he proceeded to give the Buddha a commentary. "Why do I say they can't get full? **These bhikshus are Arhats, but their individual lives differ.** Although they have become enlightened and they all have spiritual penetrations, still their bodies are not the same. Their appearances, their faces, are all different. If they were all one, then when one ate, all would get full, but they are not one; each has his own individual life. So **how could one person's eating cause everyone to be full?** Therefore, I say there is no such principle."

Sutra:

The Buddha told Ananda, "If your mind which understands, knows, sees and is aware were actually outside your body, your body and mind would be mutually exclusive and would have no relationship to one another. The body would be unaware of what the mind perceives, and the mind would not perceive the awareness within the body.

Commentary:

The Buddha told Ananda, "If your mind which understands, knows, sees and is aware were actually outside your body, your body and mind would be mutually exclusive

and would have no relationship to one another." If the mind which has awareness, which calculates, which discriminates, and which has knowledge and views were outside the body, then there would be no connection between the two. They'd have parted ways; they wouldn't reside together. Your body would be your body; your mind would be your mind, and your mind would be apart from your body. "You pay no attention to my business," they'd say, "and I won't pay attention to yours." **The body would be unaware of what the mind perceives, and the mind would not perceive the awareness within the body.** The body would not be aware of the mind or influenced by it, and if your awareness was within the body, the mind wouldn't know about it.

P2 Investigation shows there is a connection.

Sutra:

"Now as I show you my tula-cotton hand, does your mind distinguish it when your eyes see it?"

Ananda answered, "So it is, World Honored One."

The Buddha told Ananda, "If the mind and eyes create a common perception, how then can the mind be outside?

Commentary:

The Buddha's hands are extremely soft and supple, like cotton. Now I will relate a point of physiognomy. If you rub someone's hand and find it to be as soft as cotton, that person has a promising future and will eventually be honorable. Ordinary people's hands are very stiff. I know my hands, for example, are as stiff as a board, not soft like cotton. However, soft hands do not necessarily indicate a great future. The countenance is equally important in this matter. Are the features heroic? Is the person's appearance powerful? In general, women's hands are far softer than men's. If you don't believe it, you can notice next time you have occasion to shake hands with a woman. As for men, I have met only two whose hands were extremely soft. However, during the time I knew them neither one of them displayed signs of greatness. Their appearances didn't

match up. I have one disciple with extremely soft hands – he had never done any physical labor, but he is also very ordinary. A fellow student of mine, who was also a relative, also had extremely soft hands, but before I came to America he had not done anything of great importance, and I don't know if he has accomplished anything since then.

The Buddha told Ananda, "**Now as I show you my tula-cotton hand, does your mind distinguish it when your eyes see it?** When your eyes see it, does your mind make a distinction that my hand is a tula-cotton hand?"

Ananda answered, "So it is, World Honored One. Yes. My eyes see it and my mind distinguishes it. My mind makes a discrimination of fondness. 'Ah,' it says, 'the Buddha's tula-cotton hand is the very finest. This is one of the thirty-two hallmarks of the Tathagata.'"

The Buddha told Ananda, "If the mind and eyes create a common perception, how then can the mind be outside?" If your mind knows what your eyes see, how can you say that your mind is outside your body? If it were outside, how could it perceive what the eyes see? Note, though, the Buddha does not say that the mind is inside. It has already been made clear that that too, is a mistake.

P3 Concluding refutation.

Sutra:

"Therefore you should know you state the impossible when you say that the mind which knows, understands, and is aware is outside the body."

Commentary:

Since Ananda's argument that the mind is inside the body did not hold up, he revised his contention to say that the mind is outside the body. The World Honored One has used all kinds of analogies to instruct him, but unfortunately Ananda only knows how to analyze the Buddhadharma by means of his conscious mind, which is subject to production and extinction. He does not perceive the

pure nature and bright substance of the everlasting true mind. So the Buddha once again gives Ananda his critique: "**Therefore you should know you state the impossible when you say that the mind which knows, understands, and is aware is outside the body.** You were wrong," the Buddha says. The mind which calculates and understands is not outside your body. Do you understand? You have made a mistake.

N3 Ananda attaches to the mind's being hidden in the eyes.
O1 Ananda uses the analogy of crystals covering the eyes.

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, it is as the Buddha has said, since I cannot see inside, my mind does not reside in the body. Since my body and mind have a common awareness, they are not separate and so my mind does not dwell outside my body. As I now consider it, I know it is in a certain place."

Commentary:

Ananda considered: here it is again. It is just because he keeps considering that he makes mistakes. **Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, it is as the Buddha has said."** Ananda says, "I followed the Buddha to leave the home-life and I listen to the Buddha's teaching, including the doctrine the Buddha has just spoken, those proclamations of the Dharma-sound." **Since I cannot see inside, my mind does not reside in the body.** If the mind were inside the body, I'd be able to see my heart, liver, spleen, lungs, and kidneys, the five viscera. **Since my body and mind have a common awareness, they are not separate and so my mind does not dwell outside my body.** The Buddha now says it is not outside. **As I now consider it, I know it is in a certain place.** Now I have another thought. Outside is not correct, inside is not correct, therefore it has to be in a certain particular place.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "Now where is it?"

Ananda said, "Since the mind which knows and understands does not perceive what is inside but can see outside, upon reflection I believe it is concealed in the organ of vision.

Commentary:

The Buddha said, "Now where is it? Ah, you say it is in a certain place. What place? Where is your mind? Hurry up and tell me.**"** That's how he questioned him.

Ananda said, "Since the mind which knows and understands does not perceive what is inside but can see outside, upon reflection I believe." Before, he said, "As I now consider it," and here again he says, "Upon reflection." It's still his conscious mind at work. Consideration and reflection both make use of the conscious mind, the mind subject to production and extinction. What is his reflection? The mind **is concealed in the organ of vision**. The organ of vision refers to the eye. It is hidden away there, Ananda says. The mind was stashed there where no one could see it. That's what is meant by "concealed."

The Buddha doesn't reply to this right away. In fact the Sutra text leaves you in suspense for a while. Today I heard someone say that he didn't understand the Sutra. To say nothing of your not understanding, Ananda himself didn't understand at this point. You have to listen to the entire Sutra; then you will come to understand. If you haven't heard it completely, how could you be expected to understand? Of course you don't understand. Why would you want to listen to Sutras in the first place if you already understood them? You shouldn't say, "I don't understand what is being said so I'll stop listening." It's just because you don't understand that you should listen.

Sutra:

"For example, when someone places crystal bowls over his eyes, the bowls cover his eyes but do not obstruct his vision. The organ of vision is thus able to see, and discriminations are made accordingly.

Commentary:

Ananda gives the Buddha an **example** to explain his new contention. **When someone places crystal bowls over his eyes, the bowls cover his eyes but do not obstruct his vision.** Actually there is no such person, but Ananda invents someone who puts on eyeglasses – that is what is meant here. In the Buddha's day they were called crystal bowls. The glasses cover the eyes, but this does not stop the eyes from seeing out. In Ananda's analogy, the mind is represented by the eyes, and the eyes, where Ananda contends the mind is hidden, are represented by the glasses. Our mind, Ananda contends, is hidden in our eyes, but this does not stop our mind from seeing out.

The organ of vision is thus able to see, and discriminations are made accordingly. That is, as soon as you see, your mind knows it. Discrimination takes place in the organ of vision, where, Ananda says, the mind is hidden. "This time the doctrine I have expressed is the right one," Ananda says. He still considers himself to be very intelligent. "See how smart I am? I have an answer for everything the Buddha asks me." Why does Ananda keep making mistakes? It is because he uses the mind subject to production and extinction. No matter what the circumstance is, he always uses his thought-processes to consider it from each side. His considerations are grounded in the thoughts of his consciousness, and he recognizes the consciousness to be the true mind. He doesn't know that the "true mind neither exists nor does not exist, and that the true mind is the nature. He is like one who gets off on the wrong road, and the farther he goes, the more he has lost his way, and the more he has lost his way the more he thinks he's on the right road. So now he brings up yet another analogy for the Buddha to pass judgement on.

Sutra:

"And so my mind which knows, understands, and is aware does not see within because it resides in the organ. It can gaze

outside clearly, without obstruction for the same reason: it is concealed in the organ."

Commentary:

And so refers to the doctrine he was just explaining. **My mind which knows, understands, and is aware does not see within because it resides in the organ.** Why can't I see inside my body? It's because my mind is in my eyes. **It can gaze outside clearly, without obstruction for the same reason: it is concealed in the organ.** Why can I see outside but not inside? It is because my mind, which also refers to vision, the power of seeing, is concealed in the eye. So there is no obstruction when I look outside. Whether Ananda is right in his theory will become clear in the following passages.

O2 The Buddha uses dharma to show the analogy is not apt.
P1 He discusses its aptness.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "Assuming that it is concealed in the organ, as you assert in your analogy of the crystals: if someone were to cover his eyes with the crystals and look at the mountains and rivers, would he see the crystals as well?"

"Yes, World Honored One, if a person were to cover his eyes with the crystals, he would in fact see the crystals."

Commentary:

Having heard Ananda use the analogy of the crystals, **the Buddha said to Ananda, "Assuming that it is concealed in the organ, as you assert in your analogy of the crystals**: Suppose it is the way you explain it,**"** the Buddha says, "and the mind is concealed in the organ. **If someone were to cover his eyes with the crystals and look at the mountains and rivers, would he see the crystals as well?** When the person in your analogy puts on his glasses in order to see, and he takes a look at the mountains, rivers, and the vast expanse of earth, does he see his glasses?"

"Yes, World Honored One, if a person were to cover his eyes with the crystals, he would in fact see the crystals." When someone wears glasses, he sees the mountains, rivers, the vast expanse of earth, and he also sees the glasses. That is what the Buddha asked Ananda and how Ananda answered him.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "If your mind is analogous to the eyes covered with crystals, then when you see the mountains and rivers, why don't you see your eyes?

Commentary:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "You put on glasses and can see the mountains, rivers, and the vast expanse of earth, and you can also see the glasses. **If your mind is analogous to the eyes covered with crystals**: if your mind dwells within your organ of vision, then your eyes are like the glasses in the analogy. So when your mind looks at the mountains, rivers, and the great expanse of earth, **then when you see the mountains and rivers, why don't you see your eyes?**"

Someone will say, "I see my eyes."

I also see my eyes – if I look in a mirror. If you could see your own eyes simply by turning your light back to reflect upon yourself, then the Buddha's argument here wouldn't work. But the flesh eyes of an ordinary person cannot see themselves. And although Ananda had attained the first stage of Arhatship, his flesh eyes could not look into his own eyes either.

So the Buddha asks him, "You made up the analogy for the mind being hidden in the eyes, like eyes covered with glasses, didn't you? So your eyes would be like the crystals in the analogy and since you say you can see the crystals, then why can't you see your own eyes at this very moment?" That is what the Buddha asked him.

P2 Both possibilities explored and refuted.

Sutra:

“If you could see your eyes, your eyes would be part of the external environment. If you cannot see them, why did you say that the mind which understands, knows, and is aware is concealed in the organ of vision as eyes are covered by crystals?

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha questioned him further: “**If you could see your eyes, your eyes would be part of the external environment.** It has already been made clear that Ananda does not see his eyes, but the Buddha was concerned that Ananda would become so confused that he’d contend he could see his own eyes. So the Buddha points out that if Ananda could see his eyes, that would mean his eyes would be outside of him and not part of his body. And thus the organ of vision would not be able to see. You couldn’t say, as you just did, that “the organ of vision is thus able to see, and discriminations are made accordingly.”

“If you cannot see them, why did you say that the mind which understands, knows, and is aware is concealed in the organ of vision as eyes are covered by crystals?” If you cannot see your eyes, then how can you contend that your mind is hidden in your organ of vision the way eyes are covered by glasses? Your analogy of the crystals doesn’t hold up. It too is incorrect.

P3 The concluding refutation.

Sutra:

“Therefore you should know that you state the impossible when you say that the mind which knows, understands, and is aware is concealed in the organ of vision in the way that the eyes are covered by crystals.”

Commentary:

Therefore – because of the doctrine explained above – **you should know that you state the impossible when you say that the**

mind which knows, understands, and is aware is concealed in the organ of vision in the way that the eyes are covered by crystals. To say that the aware and knowing mind is hidden in the eye is incorrect. Your doctrine is not right. You are wrong again.

N4 Ananda attaches to the mind as being divided between light and dark.

O1 Ananda takes seeing light and dark as divisions of inside and outside.

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, I now offer this reconsideration: viscera and bowels lie inside the bodies of living beings, while the orifices are open to the exterior. There is darkness at the bowels and light at the orifices.

Commentary:

Ananda was criticized by the Buddha and so he came up with another theory to answer the Buddha's question. **Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, I now offer this reconsideration.** Now I think of it this way: **viscera and bowels lie inside the bodies of living beings, while the orifices are open to the exterior."** What is meant by living beings? This phrase has already appeared several times in the text but has not yet been explained. Living beings[8] are born from the mixing of a multitude of karmic conditions which result in birth. Each of you people are not engendered from one kind of karma but from many. Just as a field of crops requires many conditions beyond the simple planting of a seed – there must be earth, sunshine, and rain – we people are also born from a variety of causes and conditions. The "viscera and bowels": the heart, liver, spleen, lungs, and kidneys are said to be the five viscera, and the six bowels are the large intestine, the small intestine, the "triple warmer," the bladder, the gall bladder, and the stomach. The bowels can be said to be hidden because they are inside and they can also be called "filthy" because everything in them is either excrement or urine.

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8. Chinese 眾生 *jung seng* literally "multitudes of births"

As to the apertures and openings, the eyes, ears, and nose are apertures, and the eye-socket, the entrance to the inner ear, and the nostrils are openings. Then, of course, there is the mouth-opening, an opening which you never manage to fill up. Today you eat your fill, but tomorrow you are hungry again. So you eat again and fill up the opening but by the following day you're hungry once more. Everything has moved out. Inside there is a constant assimilation of the new and elimination of the old. This process causes people a lot of trouble. Eating is a lot of trouble. Just think of it: if you didn't spend three hours a day eating three meals, we could use the extra time to lecture sutras or sit in Ch'an. But because you eat three times a day, you're kept extremely busy every day just filling up that mouth-opening. But in the end, you'll never fill it up.

There is darkness at the bowels and light at the orifices. Since the bowels and viscera are hidden in the body, they are in darkness. How is it one knows external things? Because there are apertures, so there is light. Now Ananda isn't referring to them as eyes in his analogy, but as apertures. Ananda is really smart. He's decidedly intelligent.

Sutra:

"Now, as I face the Buddha and open my eyes, I see light: that is to see outside. When I close my eyes and see darkness, that is to see within. How does that principle sound?"

Commentary:

Ananda is more intelligent than we are. We couldn't think of so many ways to answer. How many methods has he come up with already? He has one opinion after another. Whatever the Buddha asks, he has an answer for it. He's always got something to say; he's full of theories and arguments and thoughts and considerations. He was, after all, foremost among the disciples in learning. Where there is no principle, he can expound a principle. He would have made a first-rate lawyer. **Now, as I face the Buddha and open my eyes, I see light: that is to see outside. When I close my eyes and see darkness, that is to see within.** When I see light, it is seeing

outside; when I see darkness, it is seeing inside. **How does that principle sound?** What do you say to that?

O2 The Tathagata uses the fact that seeing inside is not possible as his refutation.
P1 His refutation: that which is seen is not inside.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "When you close your eyes and see darkness, does the darkness you experience lie before your eyes? If it does lie before your eyes, then the darkness is in front of your eyes. How can that be said to be 'within'?

Commentary:

Instead of telling Ananda whether his latest proposition is right or wrong, the Buddha asks Ananda another question. **The Buddha said to Ananda, "When you close your eyes and see darkness.** You say that when you close your eyes you see darkness, and that that is to see within. But **does the darkness you experience lie before your eyes?** Speak up. Tell me. **If it does lie before your eyes, then the darkness is in front of your eyes. How can that be said to be 'within'?** How can you say that to see darkness is to see inside?**"**

Sutra:

"If it were within, then when you are in a dark room without the light of sun, moon, or lamps, the darkness in the room would constitute your 'warmers' and viscera. If it is not before you, how can it be seen?

Commentary:

If it were within: the Buddha continues, "If you reason that the darkness before you is actually your insides, **then when you are in a dark room without the light of sun, moon, or lamps, the darkness in the room would constitute your 'warmers' and viscera**. That darkness would become your 'three warmers' and your viscera and bowels. The whole room would turn into your organs and intestines. Why? Because it is dark, and you've just said that the darkness you see is inside your body. The "three warmers"

consist of the upper, the middle and the lower warmers. The function of these three is very important in the human body. If they become diseased, the resulting illness is not easy to cure.

If it is not before you, how can it be seen? If the darkness is not in front of your eyes, how can you see it? You can only see what is before your eyes. How can you see things that are behind your eyes. What about it? The Buddha is demolishing Ananda's latest proposition from every angle, and it's hard to say what line of reasoning Ananda might use to answer him next.

P2 His refutation: the ability to see is not actual.

Sutra:

"If you assert that there is an inward seeing that is distinct from seeing outside. In that case, when you close your eyes and see darkness, you would be seeing inside the body. Therefore, when you open your eyes and see light, why can't you see your own face?

Commentary:

The Buddha continues his questioning: **If you assert that there is an inward seeing that is distinct from seeing outside.** Suppose that there are two kinds of seeing and that you are able to face inward and see. **In that case, when you close your eyes and see darkness, you would be seeing inside the body. Therefore, when you open your eyes and see light, why can't you see your own face?** You argue that to see darkness is to see inside your body; then when you open your eyes to see outside, why can't you look at your own face and tell me what it's like? Note that Ananda doesn't protest that he can see his own face in a mirror, which is what someone else did upon hearing this argument. Maybe they didn't have mirrors then.

Sutra:

"If you cannot see your face, then there can be no seeing within. If you can see your face, then your mind that knows and

understands and your organ of vision as well must be suspended in space. How could they be part of your body?

Commentary:

If you cannot see your face, then there can be no seeing within. I just asked you if you can see your face, and you didn't have anything to say. But if you can't see your own face with your eyes open, how can you close your eyes and see inside. This is what you have argued, but your contention has no basis in principle.

If you can see your face, then your mind that knows and understands and your organ of vision as well must be suspended in space. How could they be part of your body? If you say you actually can see your own face, though, then your discriminating mind and your eyes wouldn't be on your face; they'd be out in space. If they were on your face, then you couldn't see your face. But if you can see your face, then how can you say your mind and your seeing are inside?

Sutra:

"If they are in space, then they are not part of your body. Otherwise the Tathagata who now sees your face should be part of your body as well.

Commentary:

If they are in space, then they are not part of your body. Empty space is not your body, and if your mind and eyes were in space they wouldn't have any connection with you. **Otherwise –** if you say that they would have a connection with you – if you say that those separate entities in space would be part of your substance **– the Tathagata who now sees your face should be part of your body as well**. The Buddha told him, "If you want to say that your eyes and mind are in empty space, then they are not part of your body. If you say that this mind and these eyes of yours are hanging in space and yet are still part of your body, then it should be that the Tathagata, who sees your face from the vantage-point of space, is

also part of your substance. In that case, I'd be you. I have become you. Is that possible?"

Sutra:

"In that case, when your eyes perceive something, your body would remain unaware of it. If you press the point and say that the body and eyes each have an awareness, then you should have two perceptions, and your one body should eventually become two Buddhas.

Commentary:

In that case, when your eyes perceive something, your body would remain unaware of it. Is that the way it is? **If you press the point and say that the body and eyes each have an awareness, then you should have two perceptions.** If you insist on this line of reasoning, then it follows that there are two kinds of awareness, that of the body and that of the mind. Each would have its own separate perception. **And your one body should eventually become two Buddhas.** Why? It is a single perception which realizes Buddhahood. Now that you have dual perception, you should become two Buddhas. Can you become two Buddhas?

P3 Concluding refutation.

Sutra:

"Therefore you should know that you state the impossible when you say that to see darkness is to see within."

Commentary:

Therefore you should know: because of the various doctrines just discussed, you should know **that you state the impossible when you say that to see darkness is to see within**. Once again, your argument is incorrect.

N5 Ananda attaches to the mind as being that which exists in response.
O1 Ananda reckons the mind exists in response to whatever it joins with.

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "I have heard the Buddha instruct the four assemblies that because the mind arises every kind of dharma arises, and that because dharmas arise, every kind of mind arises.

Commentary:

Now Ananda questions the Buddha again. **Ananda said to the Buddha, "I have heard the Buddha instruct the four assemblies."** Before, Ananda used his own ideas to think of places where the mind and seeing might be located, and each idea was refuted by the Buddha. So now he doesn't speak for himself; he quotes the Buddha. He said, "I have heard the Buddha instruct the four assemblies." The four assemblies are the bhikshus, bhikshunis, upasakas, and upasikas. Bhikshus and bhikshunis are men and women who have left the home-life. Upasakas and upasikas are men and women at home who have received the five precepts (not to kill, not to steal, not to commit sexual misconduct, not to lie, and not to take intoxicants.) Upasakas and upasikas are also called laypeople. These four groups comprise the four assemblies.

Because the mind arises every kind of dharma arises. Because you have a mind – the Buddha is speaking of the conscious mind – all kinds of dharmas arise. This refers to the manifestation, within the consciousness, of various states of being. Dharmas have no self-nature, but only come into being because of conditions. **Because dharmas arise, every kind of mind arises.** Because causes and conditions produce dharmas, every kind of thought arises. That is what you said, Buddha; this is a doctrine which the World Honored One explained, and so no doubt it is right, Ananda says. Now, based on that doctrine of the World Honored One, I have an opinion. What is it?

Sutra:

"As I now consider it, the substance of that very consideration is truly the nature of the mind. Wherever it comes together with things, the mind exists in response. It does not exist in the three locations of inside, outside and in between."

Commentary:

As I now consider it. Ananda's thinking again. What is he thinking? **The substance of that very consideration is truly the nature of the mind.** The substance of my thought is the nature of my mind. My being aware, my understanding, my knowing, these are the nature of my mind (the nature he refers to is not the self-nature but is still the conscious mind).

Wherever it comes together with things: Wherever the mind encounters causes and conditions, it joins together with those causes and conditions, and **the mind** comes into being **in response.** Whenever there is a joining together, there is the mind. If there isn't any joining together, there isn't any mind. **It does not exist in the three locations of inside, outside and in between.** It isn't inside, it isn't outside, and it isn't in between; rather, anywhere that it meets with causes and conditions, the mind comes into being. If there are no conditions then probably there isn't any mind. Once again, what Ananda says seems to be right but isn't. He still has not recognized it clearly. So…

O2 The Tathagata uses the refutation that it lacks a substance or a fixed place.
P1 His refutation that it lacks a substance.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "Now you say that because dharmas arise, every kind of mind arises. Wherever it comes together with things, the mind exists in response. But if it has no substance, the mind cannot come together with anything. If, having no substance, it can yet come together with things, that would constitute a nineteenth realm brought about by a union with the seventh defiling object, and there is no such principle.

Commentary:

The Buddha fires Ananda's explanation back at him. **The Buddha said to Ananda, "Now you say that because dharmas arise, every kind of mind arises. Wherever it comes together with things, the mind exists in response.** You say that the mind comes into being wherever it comes together with things. If there is no coming together, then, of course, there is no mind. That's the way you explain it. **But if it has no substance, the mind cannot come together with anything.** But does this mind you speak of actually have any substance to it? If it has no substance or appearance it cannot unite with anything. If there were no form or appearance, what would join with what?

If, having no substance, it can yet come together with things. It would be unreasonable to insist that it can unite with things even though it has no substance, but suppose you do insist. **That would constitute a nineteenth realm brought about by a union with the seventh defiling object, and there is no such principle.** The eighteen realms would turn into the nineteen realms: the additional realm would be the one where, as you explain it, your mind comes into being. What are the eighteen realms? Eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind are the six organs. Forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and dharmas are the six defiling objects. And between the six organs and the six defiling objects are produced discriminations, called the six consciousnesses. Altogether, these make up the eighteen realms. The six organs and six defiling objects which face them are called the twelve places or twelve entrances. The six consciousnesses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and mind-consciousness are added to make eighteen realms. The Buddha points out that the logical extension of Ananda's argument is that there is a nineteenth realm, the place in which a supposed substanceless mind comes into being when it "comes together with things." These things the mind joins with would be a seventh defiling object. But there is no such principle. Ananda is wrong again.

P2 His refutation that a substance exists.

Sutra:

“If it does have substance, when you pinch your body with your hand, does your mind which perceives it come out from the inside or in from the outside? If it comes out from the inside, then, once again, it should see within your body. If it comes in from outside, it should see your face first.”

Commentary:

The Buddha now explains his reason for saying Ananda is wrong again. **If it does have substance**: the Buddha has just shown it is absurd to say the mind has no substance. But if it does have a substance, if your mind has a mind-substance, **when you pinch your body with your hand, does your mind which perceives it come out from the inside or in from the outside?** Does the mind come forth from within or does its substance enter in from outside? At first you maintained that your mind is inside, but now you have stated that it is not inside, outside, or in between. Where, then, does your mind come from when it comes together with things as you say it does? Now I tell you to pinch yourself, and your mind comes together with that. Does your mind which perceives the pinch come from outside or from inside? **If it comes out from the inside, then, once again, it should see within your body.** It’s already been proven that the mind cannot be inside, since otherwise it would see inside the body. **If it comes in from outside, it should see your face first.** If your mind is outside, it would be seeing your face before it perceives the pinch. Does your mind see your own face?

Ananda got irritated with the Buddha at this point.

Sutra:

Ananda said, “Seeing is done with the eyes. The mind’s perception is not that of the eyes. To say it sees doesn’t make sense.”

Commentary:

Ananda decided that the Buddha's explanation was too illogical, so he thereupon disagreed and began to argue. **Ananda said, "Seeing is done with the eyes. The mind's perception is not that of the eyes.** It is the eyes which see things. The mind just knows things. **To say it sees doesn't make sense.** You said the mind sees, but that is certainly wrong. That also lacks principle. Before, the Buddha criticized Ananda's idea and said "there is no such principle." And now Ananda retorts with the same criticism. "You say that if the mind comes from outside, it should see the face. But the mind merely knows things; it doesn't see them. What sees are the eyes." The farther he runs, the farther away he gets.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "To suppose that the eyes can see is like supposing that the doors of a room can see. Also, when someone has died but his eyes are still intact, his eyes should see things. How can it be death if one can still see?

Commentary:

The Buddha said, "To suppose that the eyes can see is like supposing that the doors of a room can see." Can doors of a room see things? **Also, when someone has died but his eyes are still intact, his eyes should see things. How can it be death if one can still see?** In fact, of course, once you're dead your eyes cease to see, though they may still be physically intact. If it were the case that after death the eyes can still see, how can this be death?

But these days dead people's eyes are removed and put in eye-banks. They still can be used. What does this prove about the Buddha's contention in the Sutra that eyes can't see after death? Although it may be that the eyes can see, they still need to borrow the efficacious quality of the self-nature in order to see. If there is just an eye all by itself, although it has the potential to see, it is devoid of awareness. So it cannot see. You must add the efficacious bright aware nature of a person in order to enable it to see. The eyes are like doors or windows. They do not see by themselves. They are

transparent bodies which act as windows through which people can look at things. In the body of a dead man they have no power.

Sutra:

“Furthermore, Ananda, if your mind which is aware, understands, and knows in fact has substance, then is it a single substance or many substances? Does its substance perceive the body as it now resides in it or does it not perceive it?

Commentary:

The Buddha continues to address his disciple. **Furthermore, Ananda, if your mind which is aware, understands, and knows in fact has substance**: if you are determined upon saying that your mind which calculates and discerns all things has a substance, **then is it a single substance or many substances?** Does your mind have one substance or many? **Does its substance perceive the body as it now resides in it or does it not perceive it?** Where is this substance in your body? Does it spread throughout the body or not?

Sutra:

“Supposing that it were a single substance, then when you pinched one limb with your fingers, the four limbs would be aware of it. If they all were aware of it, the pinch could not be at any one place. If the pinch were confined to one place, then the single substance you propose would not be possible.

Commentary:

Supposing that it were a single substance, then when you pinched one limb with your fingers, the four limbs would be aware of it. Let us suppose the mind is composed of a single substance which resides within the body. Then if you pinch one of your legs or arms, both legs and both arms should all have an awareness of it. Why? Because you said the mind has a single substance. But in fact if you pinch one limb, only that one limb feels pain. The other three limbs are unaware of the pinch. **If they all were aware of it, the pinch could not be at any one place.** If

you say that when you pinch one leg, the other leg and both arms feel it, then how could you be able to locate the pinch on your body? It would feel the same as if you had pinched all four limbs. **If the pinch were confined to one place, then the single substance you propose would not be possible.** If you can feel the pinch in a certain single place, then you can't contend the mind is a single substance which pervades the body.

Sutra:

"Supposing that it were many substances: then you would be many people. Which substance would be you?

Commentary:

Supposing that it were many substances. This would explain why the three limbs don't feel a pinch on the fourth limb. But **then you would be many people.** If your mind has many mind-substances, then you wouldn't be just one person. In that case, **which substance would be you?** Which mind-substance is your mind-substance?

Sutra:

"Supposing it were a pervasive substance: the case would be the same as before in the instance of pinching. But supposing it were not pervasive; then when you touched your head and touched your foot simultaneously, the foot would not perceive it if the head does. But that is not how you are.

Commentary:

Supposing it were a pervasive substance: the case is the same as before in the instance of pinching. The Buddha patiently repeats his earlier explanation. If you say that the mind is a single substance that pervades the body, then when you pinch one spot, your whole body should hurt. **But supposing it were not pervasive; then when you touched your head and touched your foot simultaneously, the foot would not perceive it if the head does. But that is not how you are.** But if you say the substance of the mind does not entirely pervade the body, then your foot would

have no feeling when you bump your head. But, bump your head or not, your foot still feels things. So you can't say the mind does pervade the body, and you can't say it doesn't, either.

P3 Concluding refutation.

Sutra:

"Therefore you should know that you state the impossible when you say that wherever it comes together with things, the mind exists in response."

Commentary:

This was Ananda's fifth attempt to locate his mind, and the Buddha again showed his learned disciple's arguments are groundless.

N6 Ananda attaches to the mind as being in the middle.
O10 Ananda attaches to the mind as being in the middle of the organ and the defiling object.
P1 Ananda brings up the teachings and recklessly reckons the mind is in the middle.

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, I also have heard the Buddha discuss true appearance with Manjushri and the other disciples of the Dharma king. The World Honored One also said, 'the mind is not inside and it is not outside.'

Commentary:

Ananda again uses the Buddha's words as a basis for his argument, to prove that his own opinion is valid. **Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, I also have heard the Buddha discuss true appearance with Manjushri and the other disciples of the Dharma king.** This is how you explained it, Buddha; it's not something I made up. You said it that way." As soon as he opens his mouth, he tries to justify himself by turning the Buddha's words to his own use. Ananda has a lot of nerve.

Manjushri is Wonderfully Auspicious Bodhisattva, also called Wonderful Virtue Bodhisattva. The other disciples of the Dharma King include Gwan Yin Bodhisattva, the Bodhisattva who regards the sounds of the world; *Mahasthamaprapta* Bodhisattva, the Bodhisattva of great strength, and other great Bodhisattvas. The Buddha is the Dharma King, and Bodhisattva are his disciples.

What is meant by "true appearance"? True appearance has no appearance. There isn't anything at all. That is true appearance. And yet there is nothing which has no appearance. You say there isn't anything at all, but at the same time there is everything. Everything is produced from within true appearance. There is nothing which does not come forth from within it. We speak of true emptiness, of wonderful existence, and of true suchness; these also refer to "true appearance." Within true appearance is wonderful existence. In wonderful existence is true emptiness. So it is said that true emptiness does not obstruct wonderful existence, and wonderful existence does not obstruct true emptiness. At the ultimate point of emptiness there is existence. At the ultimate point of existence there is nothing at all

"**The World Honored One also said, 'The mind is not inside and it is not outside.'** Buddha, this is just what you've said. If I repeat it, how can you say it is wrong?" is what Ananda is implying.

Sutra:

"As I now consider it, if it were within, it would see things it does not see; if it were outside, there would be no common perception. Since it cannot see inside, it cannot be inside; and since the body and mind have common perception, it does not make sense to say it is outside. Therefore, since there is a common perception and since there is no seeing within, it must be in the middle."

Commentary:

"As I now consider it: I am thinking it over again. **If it were within, it would see things it does not see.** Saying the mind is within the body would imply that we could see within the body. **If**

it were outside, there would be no common perception. The Buddha has just demonstrated that if the mind were outside the body, the mind and body could not have the kind of common perception that they do have. **Since it cannot see inside, it cannot be inside.** Since the mind does not know what is inside the body, it won't work to say that it is located inside. **And since the body and mind have common perception, it does not make sense to say it is outside."** Our bodies and minds share knowledge of one another, as the Buddha just explained when he pointed out that Ananda experiences a common perception when his eyes see the Buddha's hand and his mind distinguishes it. If the mind were outside the body, there would be no common perception. So it can't be outside.

Therefore, since there is a common perception and since there is no seeing within – now that I understand this, I realize that **it must be in the middle**. Ananda now decides that the mind is in the middle. Precisely where this middle is he doesn't say. Is it in the middle of the body, or in a middle outside the body? That is how the Buddha proceeds to question him.

P2 The Tathagata says the location of the middle must be fixed.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "You say it is in the middle. That middle must not be haphazard or without a fixed location. Where is this middle that you propose? Is it in an external place, or is it in the body?

Commentary:

The Buddha said, "You say it is in the middle. That middle must not be haphazard or without a fixed location. This middle of yours has to be somewhere; there has to be some sense and certainty about it. Therefore, **where is this middle that you propose?** Consider that question. The Buddha presses the point: **Is it in an external place, or is it in the body?** Is your middle someplace outside, or it is in your body?

Sutra:

"If it were in the body, it could not be on the surface of the body since that is not the middle. But to be in the middle is no different than being inside. If it were in an external place, would there be some evidence of it, or not? If there were no evidence of it, that would be the same as if it did not exist. If there were evidence of it, then it would have no fixed location.

Commentary:

If it were in the body, it could not be on the surface of the body since that is not the middle. But to be in the middle is no different than being inside. Supposing this middle you say the mind is located in is in the body: is it on the surface of the body? But then it isn't in the middle. Is it in the middle of the body? But that is to say the mind is inside the body, and we've already rejected that as impossible. **If it were in an external place, would there be some evidence of it, or not?** If you say that the middle is somewhere else, can you point out where it is? Is there something about it that allows us to discern it? **If there were no evidence of it, that would be the same as if it did not exist.** If there is nothing to indicate its presence, if you can't point to it as being in a certain place, then it does not exist. You still haven't shown me a middle. **If there were evidence of it, then it would have no fixed location.** Why does the Buddha say this?

Sutra:

"Why? Suppose that someone were to indicate the middle by a marker. When regarded from the east, it would be to the west, and when regarded from the south, it would be to the north. The marker is unclear, and the mind would be equally chaotic."

Commentary:

Why? **Suppose that someone were to indicate the middle by a marker.** Someone pounds a sign in the ground reading: "This place is the middle." **When regarded from the east, it would be**

to the west, and when regarded from the south, it would be to the north. Your sign may say "middle" but if you stand to the east of it, the sign is west of you: how is this the middle? Then you might stand to the south of it: now it is to the north of you. This is also not the middle. Basically, as I said earlier, the ten directions do not exist. You might say that something is south of you, but if you go south of it, it becomes north. You could then say it is north, but if you go north of that north, it becomes south again. So which is it? There is nothing fixed about it. The principle is the same here. **The marker is unclear, and the mind would be equally chaotic.** The marker doesn't indicate anything at all; it cannot fix a middle. If the mind were in the middle, it would be as unfixed as your marker; it would be chaotic. Ultimately, which place is the middle? There isn't any place that is the middle. So the middle you speak of is probably also a mistake.

P3 Ananda brings up an alternative view.

Sutra:

Ananda said, "The middle I speak of is neither of those. As the World Honored One has said, the eyes and forms are the conditions which create the eye-consciousness. The eyes make discriminations; forms have no perception, but a consciousness is created between them. That is where my mind is."

Commentary:

Ananda said, "The middle I speak of is neither of those. The mind isn't located inside or outside; this isn't what I meant, World Honored One. **As the World Honored One has said, the eyes and forms are the conditions which create the eye-consciousness.** It's just as you explained before, World Honored One.**"**

Ananda is still using statements the Buddha made in the past as evidence for his points of view. "World Honored One, you said that when the eye encounters forms, the eye-consciousness is created between them. **The eyes make discriminations.** Why are the conditions for the arisal of the eye-consciousness, of seeing,

created when the eyes encounter form? Because the eyes make discriminations. **Forms have no perception, but a consciousness is created between them. That is where my mind is.** The defiling object of form has no awareness of its own, but when the eyes encounter it, a kind of discriminating mind arises in their midst, and this is where my mind is. The middle I'm talking about is the place where the eyes and forms meet to create the eye-consciousness. That is the mind."

O2 The Tathagata uses combining the two or not combining the two to refute his argument.

P1 He brings up two possibilities.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "If your mind were between the eye and an object, does the mind's substance combine with the two or does it not?

Commentary:

The Buddha listened to Ananda dispute his explanation and replied, **"If your mind were between the eye and an object, does the mind's substance combine with the two or does it not?"** Suppose it is as you say, and the mind is in the middle between the eye and the defiling object of form. Do they combine? Are they one or are they two?"

P2 He shows that both possibilities are impossible.

Sutra:

"If it did combine with the two, then objects and the mind-substance would form a chaotic mixture. Since objects have no perception, while the substance has perception, the two would stand in opposition. Which is the middle?

"If it did not combine with the two, it would then be neither perceiver nor perceived and would have no substance or nature. Where would the characteristic of 'middle' be?

Commentary:

If it did combine with the two – if your mind, the mind you say is in the middle, includes the sense organs and their objects **– then objects and the mind-substance would form a chaotic mixture**. Which, then, is the substance of your mind, and which are the objects? Can you make a distinction? If you cannot, they are mixed chaotically together in a confusing disorder. **Since objects have no perception, while the substance has perception, the two would stand in opposition.** Things don't know anything, while your eye-organ has a mind-substance. They are opposites. **Which is the middle?** Where is the middle you speak of? Is your mind in the middle of your eye, or is it in the middle of the objects the eye sees?

If it did not combine with the two, it would then be neither perceiver nor perceived and would have no substance or nature. If your mind does not combine with the eye and the object the eye sees, it will not be perceiving anything; it will have no nature that is aware. **Where would the characteristic of 'middle' be?** In the final analysis, where is your mind?

P3 Concluding refutation.

Sutra:

"Therefore you should know that for the mind to be in the middle is impossible."

Commentary:

For these reasons, Ananda, you should understand that your argument that the mind is in the middle won't stand. There is no such principle.

N7 Ananda attaches to the mind as being non-attachment.
O1 Ananda presents the idea of non-attachment as being the mind.

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, when I have seen the Buddha turn the Dharma wheel in the past with great Maudgalyayana, Subhuti, Purna, and Shariputra, four of

the great disciples, he often said that the nature of the mind which perceives makes discriminations, and is aware is located neither within nor outside nor in the middle; it is not located anywhere at all. That very non-attachment to anything is what is called the mind. Therefore, is my non-attachment my mind?"

Commentary:

One suspects that Ananda began to get nervous after hearing the Buddha refute yet another of his arguments. He had exhausted his knowledge and reached the end of his wits. By this time, there was no way out for him; there was no escape. So once again he transferred some of the principles the Buddha had spoken previously to the present situation in an attempt to save himself from defeat.

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, when I have seen the Buddha turn the Dharma wheel in the past with great Maudgalyayana, whose name means "descendent of a family of bean-gatherers"; **Subhuti,** whose name means "born into emptiness"; **Purna,** whose name means "son of completion and compassion"; and **Shariputra, four of the great disciples**. They turn the Dharma wheel together. What does it mean to "turn the Dharma wheel"? It means to use the words spoken by the Buddha to teach and transform living beings. They are spoken this way and that way and all around, just as the principles of the *Shurangama Sutra* are now being explained over and over. That's why it is called a "wheel." Turning the Dharma wheel reveals the principles and it crushes the heavenly demons and followers of other religions. When those of other religions encounter this wheel they are smashed by it. Obliterated.

He often said, he repeated many times in the Agama Sutras and the Vaipulya Sutras, **that the nature of the mind which perceives makes discriminations, and is aware is located neither within nor outside nor in the middle; it is not located anywhere at all.** If the nature of the mind which calculates, knows, and makes distinctions is located neither inside nor outside, it should be

located between them, in the middle; but it isn't there either. It isn't anywhere. **That very non-attachment to anything is what is called the mind.** The aware, perceptive mind is not attached anywhere at all, and since it has no place of attachment, it is called the mind. **Therefore, is my non-attachment my mind?** "Now, I'm not attached. The mind I speak of is also not attached. But I don't know whether one can call it 'mind.'" Ananda thought that if he asked it this way, the Buddha would certainly agree that what he referred to was the mind. After all, the Buddha himself had said so.

But what the Buddha had said previously was said in accordance with worldly dharmas. His explanation then was geared to the understanding of the people he was speaking to then. People of the Small Vehicle do not understand Great Vehicle Dharma, and if one were to explain the true mind to them without any introduction, they would not believe it; so the Buddha spoke to them about the conscious mind. He was complying with worldly dharmas. Now Ananda wishes to take the conscious mind of ordinary people as his mind. Is he right? Basically, Ananda's view would be acceptable from the point of view of ordinary people. But the mind the Buddha is speaking of is not the conscious mind. It is the permanently dwelling true mind, not the mind which has false thinking. Yet Ananda still thinks his false-thinking mind is his true mind; he continues to mistake a thief for his son.

O2 The Tathagata uses the existence or non-existence of the appearance of the mind as refutation.

P1 He asks if it exists or not.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "You say that the nature of the mind which perceives, makes discriminations, and is aware is not located anywhere at all. The entirety things existing in the world consists of space, the waters, the land, the creatures that fly and walk, and all external objects. Does your non-attachment also exist?

Commentary:

The Buddha again replied to Ananda's explanation with a question. **The Buddha said to Ananda, "You say that the nature of the mind which perceives, makes discriminations, and is aware is not located anywhere at all.** To have no attachment is to have no location. **The entirety things existing in the world consists of space, the waters, the land, the creatures that fly and walk, and all external objects.** There are two kinds of worlds: the sentient world, composed of living beings, and the material world, which includes all the mountains, rivers, the great expanse of earth, and all the various buildings. These and empty space and the myriad external objects together make up the two kinds of retributions: dependent retribution, which includes the land, the waters, the buildings; and proper retribution, which refers to our bodies. The world consists of these two. **Does your non-attachment also exist?** Among all these things in the world, where are you? What place are you not attached to? Is there someplace where there is non-attachment or is there not? If your non-attachment is nowhere, then that's the same as saying it doesn't exist.

P2 He shows that neither are possible.

Sutra:

"If it does not exist, it is the same as hairs on a tortoise or horns on a rabbit. How can you speak of non-attachment?

Commentary:

If it does not exist, it is the same as hairs on a tortoise or horns on a rabbit. Have you ever seen a turtle with hair or a horned rabbit? In other words, there is no such thing. **How can you speak of non-attachment?** If it doesn't exist, what is it you are attached to? Why did you bring up the world "non-attachment"?

Sutra:

"If non-attachment existed, it could not be said to be non-existent. To be non-existent is to be without attributes. To be

existent is to have attributes. Whatever has attributes has a location; how then can it be said to be unattached?

Commentary:

If non-attachment existed, it could not be said to be non-existent. You propose that at a certain place there is a certain non-attachment. But you cannot say there isn't anything there. You speak of non-attachment, but if there is a certain thing called non-attachment, then you still have something; and how can you call that non-attachment? But if in fact it doesn't exist – if there is nothing there – why do you want to assign the name "non-attachment" to it? That is really a case of putting a head on top of a head or riding a donkey in search of a donkey.

To be non-existent is to be without attributes. If you haven't any attachment, that is non-existence. **To be existent is to have attributes. Whatever has attributes has a location; how then can it be said to be unattached?** But if it is not non-existent, then it has characteristics, and if something has form and an appearance, it thereby must have a location. If it has a location, how can you say it is unattached?

P3 Concluding refutation.

Sutra:

"Therefore you should know, to call the aware, knowing mind non-attachment to anything is impossible."

Commentary:

Ananda's seventh attempt to locate his mind has failed, as well. The Buddha says, **"Therefore you should know, Ananda, to call the aware, knowing mind non-attachment to anything is impossible."** To say that your mind is non-attachment won't work either. Your argument won't stand. It is unreasonable.

The False Consciousness is Not the Mind

L2 The Tathagata admonishes that the false consciousness is not the mind.
M1 Ananda reproves himself and asks for instruction.

Sutra:

Then Ananda arose from his seat in the midst of the great assembly, uncovered his right shoulder, placed his right knee on the ground, respectfully put his palms together, and said to the Buddha,

Commentary:

During the dialogue with the World Honored One, Ananda had spun in circles and couldn't escape; he went around and around and still had not found the right road, because he was using his discriminating conscious mind and mistaking it for his true mind. And so from beginning to end he was unable to enter into the realm of the mysterious. He didn't measure up; he didn't pass the test.

Then Ananda arose from his seat in the midst of the great assembly; at that time there were great bhikshus, great Arhats, and great Bodhisattvas in the Dharma assembly. He **uncovered his right shoulder**. This means he let the right side of his robe fall, the way the sash I am now wearing over my robe is designed to leave the right shoulder uncovered. In China customs are such that exposing one's shoulder would not be considered respectful , but by Indian custom, uncovering the right shoulder is a gesture of respect,

especially in Buddhism. When he uncovered his right shoulder and **placed his right knee on the ground,** that represents the purity of body karma. The body cannot create evil karma in that position. He **respectfully put his palms together**: that represents the purity of mind karma. **And said to the Buddha**: that represents the purity of mouth karma. Thus the purity of the three karmas of body, mouth, and mind are represented as Ananda requests Dharma of the Buddha.

Sutra:

"I am the Tathagata's youngest cousin. I have received the Buddha's compassionate love and have left the home-life, but I have been dependent on his affection, and as a consequence have pursued erudition and am not yet without outflows.

Commentary:

Now Ananda thinks over how he has spent his time since he has left the home-life. He says, **"I am the Tathagata's youngest cousin."** In Shakyamuni Buddha's family there were four kings and eight sons. His father was one of the four brothers, each of whom had two sons. Ananda was the youngest of them. **I have received the Buddha's compassionate love and have left the home-life.** I followed the Buddha and left the home-life. In leaving home, one leaves the home of ignorance which could be said to be everyone's house; one leaves the home of the three realms, that is, the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the formless realm; one leaves the home of affliction; and one leaves the worldly home, that is the home of one's family. When you leave home, you leave these and many other kinds of homes. But though Ananda left his worldly home, he had not yet severed his emotional feelings. He still had not left the homes of ignorance and affliction or the home of the three realms.

But I have been dependent on his affection. Ananda confesses that he has relied too much on his family tie with the Tathagata. He allowed himself to be disobedient sometimes in order to get the Buddha's attention. He would sometimes act like a

child and be deliberately rambunctious, or he would purposefully not abide by the rules, and he expected the Buddha to sympathize with him, to take care of him. **And as a consequence have pursued erudition and am not yet without outflows.** He concentrated on learning at the expense of samadhi. Ananda had reached the first stage of Arhatship, but it is not until the fourth stage that one is without outflows. At the fourth stage one puts an end to birth and death does not have to flow back into the three realms. But in the first stage, outflows remain.

Sutra:

"I could not overcome the Kapila mantra. I was spun around by it and sank in the house of prostitution, all because I did not know the location of the realm of reality.

Commentary:

I could not overcome the Kapila mantra. I was incapable of opposing the mantra that came from the Brahma Heaven which the religion of the yellow-haired used – that deviant dharma of those "side doors and outside ways." I did not have enough strength to counteract it and **was spun around by it and sank in the house of prostitution.** The deviant mantra plunged me into confusion and I sank as if drowning in the sea. There is another explanation, since the Chinese character for "sank" is also the word for urine: Ananda is indicating that he came in contact with something unclean. He went into the filthy brothel where women sold themselves. He found himself stuck there as if in a cesspool and could not extricate himself. If the Buddha had not used the Shurangama Mantra to rescue him, Ananda would not have had the opportunity to compile the sutras. If the Sutra Store had been compiled at all, it would have been done by someone else. Ananda would have had no part in it. Fortunately Shakyamuni Buddha used the Shurangama Mantra to rescue him, so he was able to compile the *Shurangama Sutra* and give us a record of these causes and conditions.

All because I did not know the location of the realm of reality. The realm of reality is another name for the true mind. Why

did I sink in the house of prostitution? Because I did not know where the fundamental true mind is. To this very moment, Ananda is still trying to find a location for the mind. He’s being boggled by his own intelligence. He keeps spinning around in it and doesn’t know how to get out.

Sutra:

“I only hope that the World Honored One, out of great kindness and pity, will instruct us in the path of shamata guide the icchantikas and overthrow the mlecchas.”

Commentary:

I only hope that the World Honored One, out of great kindness and pity. Now I only have one wish, that the World Honored One will extend his great compassion, to rescue me from my suffering and bring me bliss. I hope the Buddha **will instruct us in the path of shamata guide the icchantikas and overthrow the mlecchas.** World Honored One, teach not only myself but all those in the great assembly, who upon hearing the Dharma have given rise to doubts. Instruct us in how to develop concentration; show us the path to the cultivation of the Dharma door of stillness.

“*Icchantika*” is a Sanskrit word which is interpreted to mean “insufficient faith.” Icchantikas are those whose faith is deficient, and a deficiency of faith is the same as no faith at all. Icchantikas are also said to be those who have “burned up their good roots.” What is left once their good roots are burned up? Bad roots.

Dharma Master Tao Sheng once explained the *Nirvana Sutra* in China before the final volume had arrived from India. In the first half of the sutra, it says that icchantikas have no Buddha-nature. Host Dharma Masters then explained the line as meaning that Icchantikas cannot become Buddhas. Actually, in the final volume of the sutra it says that icchantikas can also become Buddhas, but at that time the final volume of the sutra was not known in China. Nevertheless, when Dharma Master Tao Sheng came to that passage of text in the first part of the sutra, he did not follow its apparent meaning, but explained instead that icchantikas can

become Buddhas. As a result, the other Dharma Masters opposed him, were jealous of him, and said that he had had the nerve to contradict the sutra's meaning and had done it just to be different. Actually, Dharma Master Tao Sheng wasn't saying the sutra was wrong or that the Buddha had spoken incorrectly. He understood the principle behind it, and although he had not seen the final volume of the sutra, he already realized that the Buddha could not have spoken the Dharma this way. But because jealousies had been aroused, no one came to listen to him explain sutras any longer, so he went to Su Chou, near Shanghai, to Hu Ch'iu Mountain. There he lectured the Nirvana Sutra to the rocks. When he again reached the passage of text that said icchantikas do not have the Buddhanature, he asked the rocks, "I say icchantikas also have the Buddhanature. What do you say? Am I right, or not?" The rocks on the mountain bowed their heads in silent assent. So it is said:

> *When Sheng the Venerable spoke the Dharma,*
> *Even the rocks bowed their heads.*

Basically, of course, rocks are senseless things which cannot move, but even so they agreed with Dharma Master Tao Sheng's explanation and so bowed their assent. There are reasons for this. I believe there were ghosts and spirits sitting or sprawled out on the rocks. On second thought, they couldn't have been sprawled out, because you have to sit up when you listen to sutras. When the Dharma Master asked his question, the ghosts and spirits were so exuberant in their agreement that they made the rocks shake. Or, perhaps in past lives these rocks had spiritual natures which were now hidden away in a casing of rock, and this is why they could register their agreement. So,

> *When Sheng the Venerable spoke the Dharma,*
> *Even the rocks bowed their heads.*

Still, *icchantikas* are extremely difficult to save. When you elucidate principle for them, they never quite believe you. "Hey", they say, "Who ever heard of such a thing?" No matter how well

you speak Dharma for them, they don't believe you. They are like *Kaushthila* who took "non-acceptance" as his doctrine. No matter what you said to him, he wouldn't listen, he wouldn't accept it. That's an *icchantika*.

"*Mleccha*" is a Sanskrit word which is interpreted to mean "a fondness for defilement." *Mlecchas* like unclean places. *Mleccha* also means "evil knowledge and views." Most people's knowledge and points of view are good, but these people's are evil. They are solely intent upon doing wrong. They exude nothing but poisonous fluids, which are not only bad for them but also influence others to imitate them. So we people should clean up a bit and not take special pleasure in filth. Ananda asked the Buddha to overcome the mlecchas and prevent people from falling victim to a fondness for unwholesome places, from having such a problem.

Sutra:

After he had finished speaking, he placed his five limbs on the ground along with the entire great assembly. Then they stood on tiptoe waiting attentively and thirstily to respectfully hear the instructions.

Commentary:

After he had finished speaking, he placed his five limbs on the ground. "Five limbs" refer to his two hands, his two feet, and his head. In Buddhism this is the most respectful gesture of all. He bowed **along with the entire great assembly**. Not only did Ananda bow to the Buddha after he finished making his request, everyone in the great assembly followed suit. **Then they stood on tiptoe waiting attentively and thirstily to respectfully hear the instructions.** "Attentively" indicates that they listened carefully, intent upon what instructions the Buddha would give them, upon the doctrine of samadhi which Ananda had requested. They were inexpressibly thirsty for the Dharma as if their mouths were parched and they were waiting for a drink of water. The wisdom-life of the Dharma-bodies of these people had dried up and withered, and they

were waiting for the Buddha to pour the water of Dharma over them and nourish their Dharma bodies' wisdom-life.

The phrase "on tip-toe" refers to how people stretch up in readiness to listen when they are in the back of the room and wish to hear better. Those who compiled the sutras used these descriptive terms to indicate how happy these people were to hear the Dharma. They "stood waiting": this also indicates that those far from the Buddha stood on tip-toe in order to get a better view of him as they waited for him to speak. Why did they want to see the Buddha? Because everyone is fond of the Buddha's thirty-two adorning hallmarks and eighty subtle characteristics, and everyone likes to gaze at them, including the great Bodhisattvas, great Arhats, great bhikshus, and laypeople in the Shurangama Dharma assembly. I believe they were of more or less the same mind as Ananda. It was because of the Buddha's thirty-two hallmarks that Ananda had left the home-life, and it was probably because of the Buddha's hallmarks that the others in the assembly had come to hear the Dharma.

The word "respectfully" is used to indicate again how the kings, the great ministers, the elders, and laypeople all stood waiting with great reverence to hear the Buddha explain the doctrine of samadhi.

M2 The Tathagata reveals it is not the mind.
N1 The display of light destroys the manifestation of all appearances.

Sutra:

Then the World Honored One radiated forth from his face various kinds of light, dazzling light as brilliant as hundreds of thousands of suns.

Commentary:

Then was when Ananda placed his five limbs on the ground and the great assembly attentively, thirstily stood on tip-toe waiting respectfully to hear the instruction. **The World Honored One radiated forth from his face**: the Chinese is *mien men* (面門), literally "face-door," but this just refers to the face. You should not

go looking for a door on the Buddha's face. He hasn't any doors on his face, just windows. His eyes are windows and his nostrils are caves in which people can sit in meditation and cultivate. Not only is that possible in the Buddha's nostrils, it can be done in any one of ours as well . If you want to say there is a door, the mouth could be called a door, but there is no reason to stick to every word so closely.

The Buddha emitted from his face **various kinds of light, dazzling light as brilliant as hundreds of thousands of suns.** The Buddha emitted not just one kind, but many kinds of light from his face. In general there are five colors of light, but in the five colors many, many color-combinations can be distinguished. The Buddha's light was more powerful than a lightning flash, brighter than an electric light, as it radiated back and forth. The sunlight in the world we live in is very powerful, but the Buddha emitted light whose intensity was a thousand times greater than the light of hundreds of thousands of suns. How much light would you say that was? When Ananda compiled the sutras he described the Buddha's light this way because this was the way he himself had personally witnessed it.

Sutra:

The six kinds of quaking pervaded the Buddharealms, and thus lands as many as fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions appeared simultaneously.

Commentary:

The six kinds of quaking pervaded the Buddharealms. All the billions of worlds where there was a Buddha – not only our Saha world but all the others – experienced the six kinds of earthquakes. Three kinds involve movement: quaking, erupting, and heaving up. Quaking is the motion of the earth in an earthquake. Erupting refers to intermittent agitations which cause the earth to little by little gush forth like water from a fountain. Heaving up refers to continual, violent upward movements of the earth. Sometimes the earth can be heaped up to form high places

and sometimes it can sink to form depressions. At present our planet earth is in the midst of changes brought about by the six kinds of earthquakes.

The other kinds of earthquakes – cracking, roaring, and striking – involve sound. Cracking is not the same as quaking, which is a simple movement of the earth. When there is cracking, whole sections of the earth are torn asunder. The earth splits apart and often rends whole buildings in the process. Roaring occurs when the earth emits sound unheard in the world. Striking occurs when the earth splits apart and the two faces of the crevasse strike against one another.

The six kinds of earthquakes occur for various reasons: when someone in the world become a Buddha; when someone becomes enlightened, but has not yet realized Buddhahood, that is, when he accomplished the result of Arhatship; and when a demon king wishes to disturb the minds of people in the world. So there are good earthquakes and bad earthquakes. When they are good, that is, when a Buddha accomplishes the Way or someone achieves enlightenment, no matter how great a disturbance the six kinds of earthquakes cause, no one will be injured. When a demon king comes to display his demonic power and disturb the minds of people in the world, he can kill people and wreak destruction. When there is an earthquake in one country and many people perish, and then the same thing happens in another country, that is a demon king who has decided to flex his muscles, awe the people of the world, and extend the scope of his power. It is just like a political demonstration: the demon kings stage demonstrations for us people, in order to say: "Take a look at how great my demonic powers are. I can overturn heaven and upset earth." Therefore we should be careful to determine whether each experience we encounter is a good or bad situation, since there are many distinctions.

Speaking of earthquakes, I remember experiencing an earthquake one night after my mother died, when I was practicing

filial piety beside her grave. I was sitting in dhyana, and everything was empty – there was no self and no others – when suddenly I felt a movement, an agitation. I thought to myself, "Ah, what is this demon that can shake my body this way? Its strength is certainly formidable." I didn't realize it was an earthquake. The next day someone came to tell me there had been an earthquake – a very strange earthquake. During it, the well near where I sat had spouted fire. This was a water-well, not a volcano, and yet fire had come forth from it. There are many strange things in this world.

I believe someone is thinking, "I'm sure that beneath the well there was a vein of sulfur which fed a volcano, and that is why the well spouted fire." Maybe that's the way it was.

And thus: Once the six kinds of earthquakes occurred, **lands as many as fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions appeared simultaneously.** How many fine motes of dust are there? They are uncountable. Yet the lands which appeared were as incalculably numerous as dust-motes. The great Arhats, great Bodhisattvas, great bhikshus, elders, laypeople, and the king and his ministers all saw these lands appear simultaneously. What kind of experience would you say that was?

Sutra:

The Buddha's awesome spirit caused all the realms to unite into a single realm.

Commentary:

The Buddha's awesome spirit: Shakyamuni Buddha used his awesome spiritual strength, the power of his spiritual penetrations, to cause all the realms, all the lands as many as the fine motes of dust, **to unite into a single realm.** Although the lands were innumerable, they all came together into one. For example, nowadays we can enlarge a very small photograph into a very large one and reduce a very large photograph into a very small one; wouldn't you say that is a spiritual penetration? In the same way, Shakyamuni Buddha, by means of his spiritual power, made distant places close, by reducing all the myriad lands throughout the great

trichiliocosm into a single one, as if he were reducing a photograph. And yet, though the lands were united into one, each remained perfectly intact in their original order, each still located in its respective position without being mixed up. The reason the Buddha brought all the worlds together was so that everyone in all the worlds could see and listen to him as he explained the inexpressibly wonderful

Sutra:

And in these realms all the great Bodhisattvas, each remaining in his own country, put their palms together and listened.

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha brought all the lands and realms together into one because he wanted everyone to be able to listen to the explanation of the Great Shurangama Samadhi, so that the Bodhisattvas in every land could come to understand this doctrine. So he emitted a great light from his face, a blazing light as brilliant as hundreds of thousands of suns, until every land was illumined. **And in these realms all the great Bodhisattvas, each remaining in his own country, put their palms together and listened** to Shakyamuni Buddha speak dharma and explain the *Shurangama Sutra*.

N2 The two roots of true and false are revealed.
O1 The Tathagata brings up former reasons and illustrates them with an analogy.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "All living beings, from beginningless time onward and in all kinds of upside-down ways, have created seeds of karma which naturally run their course, like the aksha cluster.

Commentary:

After the Buddha had reduced the worlds to the number of fine motes of dust to a single world, in which all the respective worlds remained in perfect order, the great Bodhisattvas in each of these

worlds thirstily gazed at the Buddha with uplifted faces. Like Ananda, they were inexpressibly thirsty, wanting to drink the Dharma-water of Shakyamuni Buddha.

All of you have probably experienced a severe thirst. When you are hungry, after a while the hunger seems to subside a bit and is not so severe, but if you are thirsty, perhaps as a result of eating something salty, not having any water to drink is very difficult to bear.

Why were the Bodhisattvas so inexpressibly thirsty? They had eaten too much of the salt of affliction. Ananda, who had concentrated exclusively on being greatly learned and had neglected his samadhi-power, had eaten too much of the salt of being greatly learned. They wanted the water of samadhi to quench their thirst, to irrigate them, so they thirstily gazed upward. In explaining this, my own throat feels dry. But my dryness comes from talking, whereas the great Bodhisattva's dryness came from not having obtained the Dharma.

Some of you aren't clear about this and say, "I don't understand what I'm reading." If you know that you don't understand, that itself is understanding. If you truly didn't understand, you wouldn't even be aware of your lack of understanding. You would sit there and not know whether you understood. Now you are aware that you do not understand very much of the sutra you are reading, and that means you have some understanding. If you have the hope of understanding, the day will come when you will understand and be clear about the sutra. If you understood thoroughly right now, that would be something else again. In that case, this Dharma Master would be left with nothing to eat. If you understood the sutra before I even finished explaining it, what use would there be for me in the future? I'd be useless! However, to understand the sutra immediately isn't possible. It's also impossible to understand everything there is to know about the affairs of the world in a single day. Some time is required. As you read more, you will quite

naturally come to understand. Why don't you understand? Because you haven't read much.

The Buddha said to Ananda. Just as I am now explaining to who are reading this, the Buddha explained to Ananda. But I'm not the Buddha and you are not Ananda. I am just explaining this recorded history about Ananda for you.

"All living beings, from beginningless time onward: all living beings include those born from eggs, from wombs, from moisture, or transformation; those with form, without form, with thought, or without thought; those not entirely with thought, and those not entirely without thought. When the Buddha spoke sutras, he himself couldn't completely explain the doctrines. He said, "From beginningless time onward" – from time without any starting-point. When would you say that was? If you were trying to be logical, you would say this passage doesn't make sense. But in fact there is no way to state when people came into being.

What is the beginning? By way of explanation, just take a single family. You say, "I am my father's son." Whose son is your father? Your father is your grandfather's son. Whose son is your grandfather? You keep tracing your family tree until you can't trace it any further. "This man was my family's very first founding father," you say. But who was his founding father? Trace that. Find out. You cannot find out. It is said that people evolved from monkeys. What did monkeys evolve from? If monkeys can turn into people, how do you know that all people evolved from monkeys? Couldn't any have evolved from pigs? or from dogs? or from cows? If monkeys can evolve into people, then all other living beings can evolve in the same way. All can undergo mutual transference. So you trace back and forth and you find there isn't any beginning.

Now, with scientific and archaeological discoveries, people know how many thousands of years ago things occurred, how many tens of thousands of years ago things occurred. They know where the remains of human bones from ten thousand years ago or a

million years ago are found. So what? Is that proof of something? You cannot say it is. It doesn't prove anything.

"If that's not evidence of anything, then why do societies invest so much money in research and experimentation?" you say. That's the foolishness of this world. Having nothing to do, people look for something to do. If they hadn't done these muddled things, how could this world's resources have become so depleted and wasted away? If you truly understand, what can you say is real in this world? Find something real and bring it here for me to look at. Everyone is born in a stupor and dies in a dream.

"But they benefit the country! etc…" you say.

They're muddled people doing muddled things. They think themselves intelligent, but actually they are just cheating themselves, because one cannot find the beginning. "From beginningless time onward." One need speak of nothing more than one person's life and his genealogy which has no beginning or end. As to our lives, when would you say they began?

"Mine began at my birth in this life," you say.

If it really did begin just that short time ago, then there's no problem. It is just to be feared that it did not begin such a short time ago. That is why there is a problem.

And in all kinds of upside-down ways: That foolishness I spoke of before is just to be upside-down, and to be born in a stupor and die in a dream. You say, "I've got to give this body some good things to eat and some nice clothes to wear." And then what? Ultimately, then what? As I said before, you're just putting finery on a toilet. What's so great about it? That's to be upside-down. To invent something to do when there is nothing to do is to act "in all kinds of upside-down ways." It's to fail to recognize one's pure basic substance and to apply one's effort to false thinking instead, "Ah," you say, "So-and-so is really fine." So what if he is really fine? Or you say, "So-and-so is really rotten." So what if he is really rotten? If you investigate a little more deeply you'll find that these kinds of things do not exist. What is fine and what is rotten? It is

discrimination through the eyes of living beings that divides things into fine and rotten, good and bad, right and wrong. In the Treasury of the Thus Come One there are no such questions. There isn't anything at all in the Treasury of the Thus Come One. It is absolutely clean. Our eyes may see the mountains, the rivers, the earth, and vegetation – all the myriad things – but they are simply manifestations of consciousness. When you really understand the dharma of no production and no extinction, then there basically isn't anything at all. But this doctrine is not easy to comprehend. We must come to understand its meaning gradually.

They **have created seeds of karma which naturally run their course, like the aksha cluster.** Living beings' ignorance leads them to act in upside-down ways, and their various upside-down acts create every kind of karma. According to their various karmas, they undergo various retributions. Why do people do evil things? It is because of their ignorance, their lack of understanding, their state of delusion. Their delusion leads to the creation of bad karma, and since they create bad karma they undergo the retribution of suffering. It is three-part process: delusion, leading to the creation of bad karma, which leads to the retribution of suffering. The Buddha compares the process to the aksha, a shrub found in India which bears three fruits in a cluster on one stem. Though you may have never seen an aksha, the sutra makes the meaning clear, and one cannot fail to understand it. The aksha cluster represents the three fruits of delusion, karma, and retribution, which are interconnected as if they were joined on a single stem. You can't say which precedes the other; they follow after one another in a continuous revolution, life after life, aeon after aeon. Where would you say it all began? There is no beginning. It's an endless cycle on the spinning wheel of the six paths of rebirth.

Each of us people born here in the world is like a fine mote 'of dust which suddenly rises high, suddenly falls low, is suddenly up and suddenly down. When your actions are good and meritorious you are born higher. When you do things which create offenses, you fall. Therefore we people should do good things and accomplish

meritorious deeds. Don't do things which create offenses because this world runs on the principle of cause and effect, the law of karma. And the seeds of karma naturally run their course: you undergo a retribution for whatever you do.

There is a distinction between "karma" and "cause." It is said that whenever you plant a cause, you reap its effect. A cause is a particular action which will lead in the future to a particular effect. Karma is the general process by which this inevitably happens. It's like planting a seed in the ground in the spring: this is the cause which, at the end of the growing season, brings about the effect of the harvest in the autumn. The entire process, from planting through months of growth to maturity and harvest, is karma. The causes you plant will determine what harvest you reap. If you plant good causes, you will reap good results. If you plant bad causes you will reap bad results.

Your karma is made up of whatever you ordinarily do most. For example, when you run a business you engage in "commercial karma." Your occupational karma can be good karma or bad. If you are a butcher, for example, you have the occupational karma of killing; if you are a thief, your occupational karma is stealing; if you do nothing but engage in illicit sexual affairs, you have the occupational karma of lust. If you never tell the truth, your occupational karma is lying. In general, whatever you do continually is your karma, and your retribution will be in accordance with it.

Thus karma is created from the very first ignorant thought, and from karma born of ignorance comes retribution. The three together like an aksha cluster. This is how the Buddha clearly explains the process of karma to Ananda in this passage.

Sutra:

"The reason those who cultivate cannot accomplish unsurpassed Bodhi, but instead reach the level of a Sound-Hearer or of one enlightened to conditions, or become accomplished in outside ways as heaven-dwellers or as demon-kings or as members of the retinue of demons is that they do not

know the two fundamental roots and are mistaken and confused in their cultivation. They are like one who cooks sand in the hope of creating savory delicacies. They may pass through as many aeons there are motes of dust, but in the end they will not obtain what they want.

Commentary:

The reason those who cultivate cannot accomplish unsurpassed Bodhi: This includes those of all the outside ways as well as all Buddhists. People cultivate the Way in the hope of obtaining something, and accomplishing something. What they wish to accomplish is the unsurpassed enlightened Way. They want to obtain the unsurpassed fruition of enlightenment. “Bodhi” is the accomplishment of Buddhahood. Bodhisattvas are called Surpassed Lords because above them is the Buddha, while Buddhas are the Unsurpassed Lords, and “unsurpassed Bodhi” is the state of having accomplished Buddhahood.

But instead reach the level of a Sound-Hearer or of one enlightened to conditions: Can cultivators reach positions other than Buddhahood? Sound-Hearers are those who hear the Buddha’s sound and awaken to the Way. They cultivate the Dharma of the Four Truths. Those enlightened to conditions cultivate the dharma of the Twelve Causal Conditions.

Or become accomplished in outside ways as heaven-dwellers or as demon-kings or as members of the retinue of demons; What is meant by “outside ways”? The term has been mentioned often. Those who “seek the Dharma outside the mind” are said to follow an outside way. In fact, everyone who has not reached enlightenment or realized Buddhahood can be said, in a sense, to be outside the Way.

There are many heavens. The one closest to us is the Heaven of the Four Kings. It lies halfway up Mount Sumeru on the north, south, east, and west. The Four Heavenly Kings are the Heavenly King of Increase and Growth, the Heavenly King of Learning, the Heavenly King of the Broad Eyes, and the Heavenly King Who

Upholds his Country. The lifespan of the inhabitants of the Heaven of the Four Kings is 500 years. However, fifty years among us people is equivalent to only one day and night in that heaven.

Above the Heaven of the Four Kings is the Trayastrimsha Heaven where the lifespan of inhabitants is 1000 years. A hundred years among people is equivalent to one day and night in the Trayastrimsha Heaven. Trayastrimsha is Sanskrit for “thirty-three,” since the Trayastrimsha Heaven is made up of thirty-three heavens, eight each on the north, south, east, and west sides of Mount Sumeru, making thirty-two, with the thirty-third, the Trayastrimsha Heaven located on Mount Sumeru’s peak.

The Lord of the Trayastrimsha Heaven was a woman in the past. Once she saw a Buddha-image in a temple which had a leak in its roof. She resolved to repair the leak so the rain would not ruin the Buddha-image. She was a poor peasant woman, but she had friends, and she convinced thirty-two of her friends to join in her resolve. It was the merit and virtue derived from cultivating this vow which enabled those thirty-three people to be born in the heavens and become rulers of the Heaven of the Thirty-three. In the Shurangama Mantra is the phrase “Na Mwo Yin Two La Ye.” “Na Mwo” means homage to and “Yin Two La Ye” is the heavenly lord of the Heaven of the thirty-three(*Indra*).

The Heaven of the Four Kings and the Heaven of the Thirty-three are the first two desire-heavens. The rest of the heavens will be explained in detail later.

The demon-kings dwell in the sixth desire-heaven. Not only demon-kings, but an entire population of demons dwells there: demon women, demon-children, and demon-grandchildren. Demons, too, have retinues, or followings, and the demon-kings hold court in the sixth desire heaven, where they reign supreme. Most of the dharmas cultivated in outside ways lead the cultivators to end up as demon kings at best, and more commonly as ordinary demons. At worst they will end up as demon-women. Demon-women are particularly beautiful and quite seductive. It doesn’t

matter who you are. Ananda, for example, who had accomplished the first stage of Arhatship, didn't have enough samadhi-power to keep control of himself when he saw a demon-woman. He was ready to try anything. Demon-women are very powerful. You people who cultivate the Way should be careful not to let a demon attract you.

What do I mean by that? If you don't have sufficient samadhi power, you won't be able to maintain your composure when you encounter this situation, and the demon will spin you around and you will find yourself trailing along after a demon-woman into a demon's hole.

If I say any more, the demons will complain, "You're saying so much and exposing all our faults," so I'll stop talking. In general, just be careful. Develop your samadhi-power thoroughly, and then there will be nothing to fear. This is a most wonderful test I'm giving you.

Why can't they become Buddhas or even become demon-kings? It is **that they do not know the two fundamental roots and are mistaken and confused in their cultivation.** These two roots are extremely important and will be explained in the following passages. And they misunderstand; they are mistaken about how to cultivate and as a result become confused. They don't know how to work properly. For example, there is an outside way in India which professes to cultivate asceticism by sleeping on beds of nails. They say that one derives merit and virtue from bearing that kind of pain. What merit and virtue is there in that? Even if you were to sleep on knives, it would be of no use. Other people in India emulate the morality of cows and dogs. They mimic the behavior of those animals. Why? It is also a case of being mistaken and confused in their cultivation. They consider themselves genuine cultivators of the Way, but they are practicing non-beneficial ascetic practices which reap no fruit, no matter how hard you cultivate them.

What are they like? Now the Buddha gives us an example. **They are like one who cooks sand in the hope of creating savory**

delicacies. They may pass through as many aeons there are motes of dust, but in the end they will not obtain what they want. The sand will remain nothing but sand. It cannot change into food. Those who do not understand the two fundamental roots and are mistaken and reckless in their cultivation are doing what amounts to the same thing.

O2 The Tathagata explains what the two roots are.

Sutra:

"What are the two? Ananda, the first is the root of beginningless birth and death, which is the mind that seizes upon conditions and that you and all living beings now make use of, taking it to be the self-nature.

Commentary:

What are the two? The Buddha will now explain the two fundamental roots to Ananda, and I think everyone would like to know what they are. However, I'm not going to discuss them just yet. I'm going to tell you first about Ananda's elder brother Sundarananda, since I haven't introduced him to you yet. Sundarananda got along very well with his wife Sundari; they stuck together like glue. All day long they stayed right beside one another, they were so compatible. In fact, to distinguish him from Ananda. Sundarananda was given the name Sundari's Nanada – Sundarananda.

The day came when the Buddha went to cross Sundarananda over. He took up his bowl and went to Sundarananda's home to beg for food. When Sundarananda saw the Buddha coming, he withdrew from his wife and said, "Wait a bit, I am going to make offerings to the Buddha."

His wife said, "You are going to make offerings to the Buddha? Come back immediately. Don't go and then not come back." "Of course, I'll come right back," Sundarananda said.

Sundari then spit on the dirt floor and said, "You'd better be back before that dries, or I won't let you in my bed."

Sundarananda heeded the command and said, “I’ll be back right away, for sure.” And he took vegetables and rice to fill the Buddha’s bowl.

He went to fill the bowl, but how was he to know that the Buddha would act so strangely? The Buddha used his spiritual power. Every time Sundarananda took a step forward to place the food in the Buddha’s bowl, the Buddha backed up, so that Sundarananda couldn’t reach the bowl. Sundarananda kept advancing to keep up with the Buddha, and in just a few steps they arrived at the Jeta Grove, despite the fact that it was a long way from Sundarananda’s house. Once they got there, Shakyamuni Buddha said, “Don’t go back. You stay here with me and leave the home-life.”

Sundarananda was shocked; he got goose-flesh. “Impossible,” he said emphatically. “I can’t stay. Sundari is waiting for me. I can’t remain here and leave home.”

The Buddha said, “You can’t leave home? Let me show you some things and see what you think.” He took Sundarananda to a place where there were hordes of monkeys. “Which is more beautiful,” the Buddha asked him, “these monkeys or your wife Sundari?”

“Obviously Sundari is more beautiful,” replied Sundarananda. “How could Sundari be compared to a monkey?”

“Quite right,” the Buddha agreed, and took him to the heavens. As they strolled among they noticed one particular palace was bustling with activity as servants scrubbed and polished. There were also 500 heavenly maidens in that palace, each one exquisite beyond compare.

“Why are you doing all this cleaning?” Sundaranda asked one of the servants.

“We’re getting this palace ready for the Buddha’s cousin Sundarananda,” they replied. “After he cultivates he’ll come to

heaven to enjoy his blessings. These 500 heavenly maidens will be his wives.”

Sundarananda was ecstatic.

“Tell me, Nanada,” the Buddha said to him, “which would you say is more beautiful, Sundari or these heavenly maidens?”

“These maidens, obviously,” Sundarananda replied. “Why, compared to these maidens, Sundari is as ugly as a monkey.”

“Fine,” said the Buddha, “this place is being readied for you.” After they finished touring the place the Buddha took his cousin down to the hells. There they saw two ghosts heating a cauldron of oil. One of the ghosts was sound asleep and although the other one was awake, he didn’t have his eyes open. Nanda sized up the situation and thought to himself, “these ghosts are suppose to be tending the fire under that cauldron, but they’re not doing their job at all. Boy, are ghosts lazy!” Then he meddled a bit and nudged one, saying, “What are you doing this for?”

The little one’s droopy eyes popped open and glared at him. “What’s it to you?” he snapped.

“I just wondered,” said Sundarananda.

“You gotta know, huh? Okay, I’ll tell you. The Buddha’s got a cousin who’s cultivating the blessings of people and gods. He’s going to get born in the heavens and enjoy 500 years of heavenly blessings before he falls. Once he topples, however, he’ll come all the way down to hell and when he gets here, we’re supposed to have this pot hot. He’s to be deep-fried alive.”

Sundarananda was horrified and his hair stood on end. He suddenly understood the whole picture and thought, “Those heavenly maidens are ravishing, but 500 years of bliss with them isn’t worth it if I’m eventually going to end up in a pot of boiling oil. I’d better follow the Buddha, leave home, and be a monk.” So he forget about Sundari and left home.

In order to rescue Sundarananda, the Buddha had to accompany him to the heavens and the hells. But saving Ananda,

Sundarananda's younger brother, was proving even more difficult. The Buddha explains one principle and Ananda doesn't understand. The Buddha explains another principle and Ananda still doesn't understand. The Buddha keeps on explaining and Ananda continues to be confused. Now the Buddha reveals the two fundamental roots that cause people to be mistaken and confused in their cultivation. He wanted to lead Ananda to understand how to direct his cultivation so that he could become a Buddha in the future.

Ananda, the first is the root of beginningless birth and death. From beginningless time onward you have endured birth after birth, death after death, death after death, birth after birth. I have already explained the meaning to you: "Unaware of the pure nature and bright substance of the permanently dwelling true mind, they use false thinking. Such thoughts are not true, and so the wheel keeps turning." In this passage once again the fundamental root of continual birth and death is revealed. It **is the mind that seizes upon conditions and that you and all living beings –** not just you, but all living beings – **now make use of.** To "seize upon conditions" is to act exclusively on the basis of false thought. For example, say, you go to school and knock yourself out trying to get on the good side of your professor by buttering him up. You flatter him by using all his titles and saying things you hope will please him. Why? In the hope that he'll give you a high grade. You think, "It's clear he's going to give me an 80, but if I'm nice to him and maybe give him a gift or a little something, he might raise my grade a couple of points." You gain advantages in imperceptible ways. That is an example of seizing upon conditions.

Another example occurs during elections for President, mayor, senator. The candidates go around drumming up votes, and soliciting support from their friends. That, too, is a case of the mind seizing upon conditions, instead of letting things naturally take their course. If it were to happen naturally that you were to become President, you wouldn't have to campaign to let everyone that you were a worthy candidate. Your virtue would be obvious and people

would look up to you. You wouldn't have to persuade people; they quite naturally would elect you President. That's the ideal way to do it. Anything else falls in the realm of seizing upon conditions.

An incident involving the Chinese Emperor Yao illustrates the point. When Emperor Yao got old, he wanted to relinquish his kingdom to a virtuous and worthy person. He had heard that Ch'ao Fu and Hsu Yu had great virtue and he decided to offer the empire to Ch'ao Fu.

Why was he called Ch'ao Fu, "Nest"? For one thing, he lived in a pretty strange place. He built a nest in a tree, just like a bird, and lived there. His manner of life was so simple that he drank by just scooping up water in his cupped hands. Once some people saw him do that and realized he didn't have anything to drink from, so they gave him a gourd. He hung the gourd from a branch of his tree but it made such a racket when the wind blew that he finally threw it away; deciding it was just too much trouble.

Emperor Yao had heard how pure and lofty Ch'ao Fu was, and he was determined to yield the throne to him. So he went to announce his intent. "I'm old now," he said to Ch'ao Fu. "You should come and be emperor. I'll give my position to you."

No sooner had he gotten the words out of his mouth then Ch'ao Fu plugged up his ears and marched off. "I'm not the least bit interested in such talk," he retorted. "In fact you've dirtied my ears by saying such things to me." He headed for the river, where he proceeded to wash his ears.

Now it so happened that Hsu Yu was at the river, too, watering his ox. "Why are you washing your ears?" he demanded.

"That Emperor Yao is really odious," replied Ch'ao Fu as he scrubbed away. "He came here to tell me he wants to bestow the country on me, and he asked me to become the emperor. His proposal has made my ears dirty, so I'm washing them."

“How can my ox drink the water you’re using to clean your ear?” exclaimed Hsu Yu. “My ox can’t drink such filthy stuff.” And he led the ox upstream for a drink of clean water.

You see, in ancient times, a sage would not only refuse the imperial throne, he would even say the very request had sullied his ears. And yet today it’s “Hey! Vote for me as President!” “Select me as your governor!” as candidates barnstorm across country making connections, wining and dining, wheeling and dealing, and even buying votes. But Ch’ao Fu and Hsu Yu would not seize upon conditions. They represent the ultimate in pure and lofty virtue.

Making use of the mind that seizes upon conditions, you take **it to be the self-nature.** You mistake your ordinary mind for your self-nature, and that is why you cannot end birth and death. You haven’t recognized it for what it is; instead you take a thief for your son, who in the future will plunder all the gems in your household. It is nothing but a false thought to think you can have any accomplishment by using the mind that seizes upon conditions. This is the mistake Ananda made.

Sutra:

“The second is the primal pure substance of the beginningless Bodhi Nirvana. It is the primal bright essence of consciousness that can bring forth all conditions. Because of conditions, you consider it to be lost.

Commentary:

The second is the primal pure substance of the beginningless Bodhi Nirvana. There is no beginning; therefore the Buddha calls it “beginningless”; it was even before the beginning itself had occurred.

“Bodhi” is Sanskrit; it is interpreted to mean “awakening to the Way.” There are three kinds of Bodhi:

The Bodhi of the true nature, which refers to your inherent Buddha-nature. Originally, everyone has the Buddha-nature;

The Bodhi of actual wisdom, which refers to your genuine wisdom, not false wisdom;

Expedient Bodhi, which refers to the state of people who have accomplished Bodhi and who then use expedient and clever means to teach and transform living beings. These three kinds of Bodhi can be said to be one. Divided they are three; in combination they are one. Together they are the Bodhi of the true nature, and from it comes the Bodhi of actual wisdom and expedient Bodhi.

Where does Bodhi itself come from? Bodhi doesn't come from anywhere or go anywhere. Each of us is endowed with it. No one person has any more or less of it than anyone else. It neither increases nor decreases, is neither produced nor extinguished, is neither defiled nor pure.

Most people think that Nirvana follows upon death, but actually it is not necessarily an after-death state. It is the certification to and attainment of a principle. "Nirvana" is a Sanskrit word which is interpreted to mean "neither produced nor destroyed." Since it is neither produced nor destroyed, birth and death are ended. One attains Nirvana when one reaches the position of not being subject to birth and death. But Nirvana is not the Buddha's dying. When the Buddha dies, he enters Nirvana; he enters and certifies to the principle of Nirvana with its four virtues of permanence, bliss, true self, and purity. Some people who haven't seen things clearly in their study of Buddhism think that Nirvana is just death, but Nirvana is emphatically not death. One who holds this view does not understand Buddhist principle.

It is the primal bright essence of consciousness. "Primal" means that it is originally a pure substance, that is, one which is neither defiled nor pure, neither increasing nor decreasing. Originally its light illuminates everywhere. "Consciousness" here does not refer to the eight consciousnesses, nor to the eye-consciousness, the ear-consciousness, the nose-consciousness, the tongue-consciousness, the body-consciousness, the mind-consciousness, nor the manas or the alaya consciousnesses. It is not

any of the eight consciousnesses. It refers to the essence of consciousness, which is but another name for Bodhi Nirvana. The phrase is used here to avoid repetition for the sake of literary style. It refers to the most essential and wonderful aspect of consciousness, the inherent Buddha-nature, the bright substance of the permanently dwelling true mind **that can bring forth all conditions. Because of conditions, you consider it to be lost.** Because these causal conditions arise, you keep getting farther and farther away from where you want to be, like someone running farther and farther down the road. Didn't I say before that the more Ananda answered the Buddha's questions the farther off the track he got? All conditions are transformed and appear from within the primal bright essential consciousness, but after a long time of clutching at these conditions, it seems that something has been lost. What is lost? Nothing, really. The primal bright essential consciousness seems to be lost, but it isn't. The primal pure substance of Bodhi Nirvana is the true jewel in your household. Basically, it is right there with you but you don't know how to use it to your advantage. Since you can't use it, it seems to be lost. It is as if you had a valuable gem which you have hidden away so well that after a long time you can no longer remember where you put it. Once you forget where it is, you can no longer make use of it. Although you may be destitute, you don't know how to get at it and derive benefit from it. It's the same as if it weren't there. What do you use instead? You use your false thinking, your mind that seizes upon conditions. In the process you forget the true mind, and once it is forgotten, it is as good as lost. And this is why you have not become Buddhas and are bound up by birth and death instead: you have not found your true mind.

Sutra:

"Living beings lose sight of the original brightness: therefore, though they use it to the end of their days, they are unaware of it, and without intending to they enter the various destinies.

Commentary:

Living beings lose sight of the original brightness. Living beings seem to lose their pure basic nature, the bright substance of the permanently dwelling true mind. In actual fact it is not lost. **Therefore, though they use it to the end of their days, they are unaware of it.** Living beings use the pure nature and bright substance of the permanently dwelling true mind every day, since it is primarily from the true mind that the false-thinking mind which seizes upon conditions springs forth in the first place. Absolutely everything is a manifestation of the true mind, and it helps you from morning till night. But you don’t realize it. All you know how to use is your false-thinking mind.

The true mind is manifest in seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, awareness, and knowing. “What is the Buddha-nature?” someone once asked. Shakyamuni Buddha replied,

In the eyes it is called seeing,
In the ears it is called hearing,
In the nose it smells scents,
In the tongue it tastes,
In the hands it is dexterity,
In the feet it is agility.

He said, “What is the Buddha-nature? It is the seeing-nature and the hearing-nature. It is the natural way in which the hands hold things. All of these are imperceptible manifestations of the true mind; but people are unaware of it. Now Ananda is still confused and so the Buddha uses all manner of analogies to explain to him.

And without intending to they enter the various destinies. Because they cling to the mind that seizes upon conditions, living beings enter their various destinies and yet are unaware of what they are doing. Your destiny is the place you tend toward. You walk right into it. Where do you end up? In the various destinies; that is, on the turning wheel of the six paths. There are the three good destinies of the gods, the asuras, and people, and the three evil

destinies of the animals, the hungry ghosts, and the hell-beings. Whatever karma you create, you undergo a retribution for it. Without realizing it, you end up by entering one of the six paths. It is not that you particularly want to, but fall you do, just the same.

The destiny of the asuras is sometimes listed as an evil destiny. Asuras are said to be "strong in fighting," since fighting is what they like to do best. They are always ready to pick a quarrel with people. Asura is a Sanskrit word which is interpreted to mean "without wine" and also as "deformed." Asuras like to drink wine, but when they are in the heavens, they don't get any wine to drink. "Deformed" refers to the male asuras, whose bodies and faces are misshapen and ugly. They have hairlips and buck teeth. But the asuras women are gorgeous. The Jade Emperor encountered one such particularly beautiful female asura and chose her for his wife.

Now the Jade Emperor, Shakra, that is, liked to go hear sutras. He would transform himself into a man and come to this world to listen to sutras. But his asura wife "drank vinegar," that is, she got jealous. "You go off to the world every single day. I wonder what weird essence or fox spirit has got you in her clutches. You're chasing after a fox spirit, aren't you?" She was accusing him of playing around with another woman. Worldly women are not the only ones who get jealous about their husbands.

Eventually Shakra's wife decided to make herself invisible and follow along to find out what he was up to. (In this day and age there are private detectives to handle such matters, but probably they didn't exist then so she had to run her own investigation and spy on him for herself.) So, when the Jade Emperor arrived at the Dharma assembly, he bowed to the Dharma Master, paid his respects, and then took a seat in the assembly. It just so happen that on that particular day there were women sitting on either side of him. When the asura woman saw that, she was beside herself, and she made herself visible right there in the assembly to confront the emperor. "It's no wonder you come here every day with so many women to keep you company," she began.

The Jade Emperor was outraged. “I come here to listen to sutras and you’ve barged in and disturbed the Bodhimanda. You’re really creating heavy offenses.” He boxed her ears and she burst into tears and ran off to find her father. She demanded a divorce and refused to go back to her husband. Her father came to her defense and promised to wage war on the Jade Emperor. “I’ll defeat him and take the throne,” he consoled her. “Don’t fret.”

The fight was on. Every day the asura king did battle with the Jade Emperor. The Emperor called out his full regalia, but the asura king’s ferocious battalions were in their element, and little by little the Jade Emperor was beaten back. He was losing ground fast. As a faithful follower of the Buddha, he went to the Buddha and asked him to devise some strategy. The Buddha gave him kashaya – his robe – saying, “Take this back with you, tear it into strips and have each of your soldiers carry a piece of it. Then tell them all to recite “Mahaprajnaparamita” (Great Wisdom which has Reached the Other Shore).

The Jade Emperor did as he was instructed. The entire army began reciting “Mahaprajnaparamita” and when the next attack came the asuras fell. They were totally unprepared for the unprecedented force of the heavenly troop’s blows and admitted defeat once and for all.

Asuras are said to be “deformed.” They have the blessings of the gods, but not the virtue. There are asuras not only in the heavens but also among people. Soldiers and thieves are examples of human asuras. But a distinction has to be made here. In this country, military service is mandatory and people are drafted. Some of them are not asuras. Some of these that go into battle are just kids. At eighteen they’re drafted and at that age they haven’t the least bit of samadhi-power. They get jittery at the mere mention of war.

Front line troops should be trained for five years. For instance, they’ll be twenty-three if they enter the service at eighteen and train for five years, and by that time they have a little samadhi-power and some experience, so that if they are sent into battle, they have

sufficient courage to cope with it. If they're too young, their samadhi isn't strong, they lack experience, and they haven't got any guts. So I think that in the present circumstances, not every soldier is an asura. In former times, people who actually wanted to be soldiers or robbers could be classed as asuras.

There are other asuras besides soldiers. For instance, someone who has a big temper and is always picking fights with others has the nature of an asura. In general, asuras have violent tempers.

Wild stallions are an example of asuras. There are also asuras among the hungry ghosts. For the most part, living beings enter the four evil destinies. This is the meaning of this passage of text. Some living beings don't lose their way and are born in the path of people or in the heavens, but that is still to "enter the various destinies without intending to." You take the wrong road.

N3 The Tathagata tells him directly that the false consciousness is not the mind.
O1 The Tathagata firmly admonishes him with a straight, "hey!".

Sutra:

"Ananda, since you now wish to know about the path of shamatha with the hope of getting out of birth and death, I will question you further."

Then the Tathagata raised his golden arm and bent his five wheeled fingers as he asked Ananda, "Do you see?"

Ananda said, "I see."

Commentary:

Then the Tathagata raised his golden arm. As he was about to question Ananda, the Tathagata stretched his gold-colored arm out in front of him **and bent his five wheeled fingers as he asked Ananda, "Do you see?"** You can see how the Buddha is treating Ananda like a child by asking him such a simple question as whether he sees the Buddha raise his arm and bend his fingers. The fingers are said to be "wheeled" because the Buddha has the mark of the thousand-spoked wheel on his hands and on his feet. You

could also say that “wheeled” refers to his bending his fingers in sequence: one, two, three, four, five.

It was something everyone could see. Why did the Buddha ask about such a simple matter? You may see it as simple now, but actually it is not. The more the Buddha’s question is delved into as the text continues, the deeper and more wonderful it becomes. It is just in the course of ordinary everyday matters that you can totally comprehend your inherent Buddha-nature. The familiar places you come in contact with every day are the representations of the Buddha-nature. But when you don’t know that through your own experience, then what is wrong seems right, and what is right seems wrong, and what is not lost seems lost. Basically you haven’t lost it, but it seems lost to you. Basically you haven’t forgotten it, but you can’t quite recall it. So your own family jewels, the scenery of your homeland, are not easy to understand. Why? Because from beginningless time the fundamental root of birth and death – the mind that seizes upon conditions – has been too strong. If the mind that seizes upon conditions would disappear, you would understand your inherent Buddha-nature in an instant.

Ananda said, “I see.” Take a look at this point. Why did the Tathagata stretch out his golden arm and bend his five wheeled fingers? It was to let Ananda know that the pure nature and bright substance of the permanently dwelling mind can manifest in the eye, in the seeing-nature. And that is why he concentrates on discussing doctrines involving seeing in the following passages. He wanted to lead Ananda to become enlightened through the seeing-nature.

So the Chinese Patriarchs, the great virtuous ones of the Ch’an School would often just point a finger when asked for instruction. That is another way of telling you to become enlightened through the seeing-nature. Sometimes when you requested instruction from them they stared at you wide-eyed and speechless. They were indicating that you should break through at that point and comprehend the meaning totally. So in the Ch’an school they use

ferocious stares. The Ch’an master may make some gesture in order to lead his disciples to become enlightened. If you understand, you become enlightened; if not, you miss the opportunity. A lot of Chinese Patriarchs were that way. But they were enlightened, and so it was appropriate for them to use such methods to teach people. But you cannot say, “I heard that Patriarchs merely point their finger, so when I meet up with someone I’ll point my finger and bring about his enlightenment.”

Have you become enlightened yourself? If you yourself haven’t become enlightened, how can you teach others to do so? If you haven’t become enlightened, you shouldn’t decide to go help other people while disregarding the fact that you yourself have outflows. To try to rescue others while paying no attention to whether you yourself have accomplished the Way first is to be like a clay Bodhisattva crossing a river; he has a hard time protecting himself. Until he tries to cross the river, the clay Bodhisattva stays intact, but as soon as he hits the water, he disintegrates and disappears. If you haven’t attained the state of no outflows, and you nevertheless go out to help people, you will be influenced by the social environment you find yourself immersed in. You’ll be transformed and won’t be able to transform others. You’ll be turned around by the affairs of the world instead of being able to turn them around. So before you have attained enlightenment and the state of no outflows, you are always in danger.

Take this sutra, for example. If I didn’t understand the doctrines in it myself, I wouldn’t be able to explain it for you. I dare not say that I thoroughly understand it, but to be frank about it, I am clearer about it than you. Because I know more than you, I am explaining what I know so that you can also know it. But even at that, I’m just explaining a little. If I were to explain to you everything I know, there wouldn’t be enough time. I’m just bringing up the important points.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, “What do you see?”

Ananda said, "I see the Tathagata raise his arm and bend his fingers into a fist of light which dazzles my mind and my eyes."

The Buddha said, "What do you see it with?"

Ananda said, "The members of the great assembly and I each see it with our eyes."

The Buddha said to Ananda, "You have answered me by saying that the Tathagata bends his fingers into a fist of light which dazzles your mind and eyes. Your eyes able to see, but what is the mind that is dazzled by my fist?"

Commentary:

The Buddha said, "What do you see?" The Buddha is still talking. He hasn't entered samadhi.

Ananda said, "I see the Tathagata raise his arm and bend his fingers into a fist of light which dazzles my mind and my eyes." World Honored One, I see you stretch out your arm and bend your five wheeled fingers, and your fist emits light. That light shines brightly that I can hardly even open my eyes. My mind is illumed by it as well.

The Buddha said, "What do you see it with?" What is it that see?

Ananda said, "The members of the great assembly and I each see it with our eyes." Ananda didn't speak just for himself; he included everyone in the great assembly. He's got witnesses, the way the defense in court calls in witnesses to testify that the defendant is not a thief. He calls in friends and relatives to act as character witnesses. So if Ananda were to speak for himself, his statement that he saw with his own eyes might still be subject to question, so he drags in some support by including the great assembly. "Everyone in this assembly maintains that the eyes. They all use their eyes to see it."

The Buddha said to Ananda, "You have answered me by saying that the Tathagata bends his fingers into a fist of light

which dazzles your mind and eyes. Your eyes able to see, but what is the mind that is dazzled by my fist?” That is correct. Your eyes are capable of seeing. But what do you conceive to be your mind which is being illumined by my fist? What do you take to be he mind? The Buddha is taking another step forward.

Sutra:

Ananda said, “The Tathagata is asking where the mind is located. Now that I use my mind to search for it thoroughly, I propose that precisely what is able to investigate is my mind.”

The Buddha said, “Hey! Ananda, that is not your mind.”

Commentary:

Ananda said, “The Tathagata is asking where the mind is located. World Honored One, you now ask me where my mind is. **Now that I use my mind to search for it thoroughly”**: He looked for his mind. “I have searched every which way, absolutely everywhere, exhausting all possibilities, I have been chasing my mind. **I propose that precisely what is able to investigate is my mind.**” I can investigate things, and that means there is a mind; so that which is capable of investigating things is probably my mind. He says “propose”; that means he’s not absolutely sure. But he thought what he said had a lot of principle, and he was confident that he’d succeeded in finding the mind. Little did he know the Buddha would scold him.

The Buddha said, “Hey!” This was the same word the Buddha used to reprimand Aniruddha. “Hey! Hey! How can you sleep?” he asked him, and as a result of that reprimand, Aniruddha didn’t sleep for a week, went blind as a result and then with the aid of the Buddha opened his Heavenly Eye. Here, the Buddha uses the same word to answer Ananda. He didn’t say whether Ananda was right or wrong, he just used an expletive to yell at him. Why did the Buddha yell at Ananda? Because Ananda’s answer was a grave mistake; it was totally wrong. Earlier, he had persisted in taking the conscious mind as the true mind, and that was already a mistake. Now he still hasn’t understood. Sometimes people can wake up when they see

something while their mind is totally concentrated. Ananda was extremely intent on his dialogue with the Buddha, and at that point the Buddha showed him his dazzling hand in the hope that Ananda would realize that it is the seeing-nature that sees. But Ananda disappointed the Buddha again by saying instead that it is the eyes and the mind that see. The Buddha guided him along by saying, "Fine, it's the eyes that see; and what do you take to be the mind?" But once again Ananda said that his ability to investigate is his mind. Yet that is merely the conscious mind.

So the Buddha used sound to lead Ananda to awaken to the Way through his hearing-nature. He shouted, "Hey!" in a harsh and stern tone, using his awesome virtue to cause Ananda to be enlightened upon hearing the sound. But Ananda had been steeped in confusion too long; he knew only scholarship and had neglected samadhi power. The Buddha had worked long and hard to teach and transform him, and Ananda still didn't understand. When the Buddha saw this, he used his compassionate heart to draw him in by explaining more gently, **"Ananda, that is not your mind."**

O2 Ananda is alarmed and asks what it is called.

Sutra:

Startled, Ananda leapt from his seat, stood and put his palms together, and said to the Buddha, "If it's not my mind, what is it?"

Commentary:

Ananda was so taken aback that he jumped to his feet, looking stunned and alarmed. He stood to avoid being disrespectful when he addressed the Buddha. **Startled, Ananda leapt from his seat, stood and put his palms together, and said to the Buddha, "If it's not my mind, what is it?"** If it's not my mind, what do you call it then? Ananda didn't know what to do. Suddenly he was without a mind.

O3 The Tathagata reveals its name and clears up the mistake.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "It is your perception of false appearances based on external objects which deludes your true nature and has caused you from beginningless time to your present life to recognize a thief as your son, to lose your eternal source, and to undergo the wheel's turning."

Commentary:

This section of text explains not only Ananda's problem but the problem of you and me and everyone else. Everyone should know that from beginningless time we have all taken thieves to be our sons. We have covered over our basic nature so it cannot appear.

The Buddha said to Ananda, "Ananda, don't be nervous. Ananda, don't be upset. You're asking what it is that is able to investigate, aren't you? Now I will tell you in detail. **It is your perception of false appearances based on external objects**." "False" means it is unreal. The mind that investigates is not your self nature; it is not your true mind. It is merely a more subtle form of false thinking which makes distinctions. The shadow of external objects **deludes your true nature and has caused you from beginningless time to your present life to recognize a thief as your son**. You have mistaken the false perception of externals for your son, and so you have lost **your eternal source**. You have lost all your gems, all your family heirlooms; your basic, permanently dwelling, unchanging true mind. The meaning here is the same as it was above: it's not that you have actually lost it; it just seems to be lost. This causes you **to undergo the wheel's turning.** Because you are unaware of your own family treasure, you do not know how to make use of it, and so you rise and sink on the turning wheel of birth and death. The wheel governs you and turns you, and you cannot transcend its cycle. That is why you are the way you are now. This life, next life, life after life will follow that same endless turning, suddenly high, suddenly low, suddenly above, suddenly

below. Sometimes you are born in the heavens and sometimes you fall back to earth. There is a saying that goes:

Out of a horse's belly
into the womb of a cow.
How many times back and forth
have you passed by Yama's halls,
As you go from Shakra's palaces
down into Yama's pot?

Sometimes you become a horse, at other times you are a cow. In front of Yama's halls you trudge back and forth one knows not how many times. You are like Sundarananda, whom the Buddha took to the heavens, saying that if he cultivated the Way he would be rewarded with rebirth there, with 500 goddesses serving him. Sundarananda was beside himself with joy. But he forgot King Yama's pot, for once your heavenly blessings are used up you fall again, perhaps into the hells, where you are boiled in a pot of oil. The path of the turning wheel is dangerous. Once you start spinning on it, you end up going the wrong way and if you are in the least bit careless, once you get started in the wrong direction it is difficult to get back. So now that you have been born a human being, you should hurry up and wake up from this dream. Hurry up and get enlightened. Don't continue as Ananda did to recognize a thief as your son.

The False Consciousness is Without a Substance

L3 Determining that the false consciousness is without a substance.
M1 Ananda expresses his fear and asks for instruction.

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, I am the Buddha's favorite cousin. It is because my mind loved the Buddha that I was led to leave the home-life. It is my mind that not only makes offerings to the Tathagata, but also, in passing through lands as many as the grains of sand in the Ganges River to serve all Buddhas and good, wise advisors, and in martialing great courage to practice every difficult aspect of the dharma, I always use this mind. Even if I am slandering the dharma and eternally withdrawing my good roots, it would also be because of this mind. If this is not my mind, then I have no mind, and I am the same as a clod of earth or a piece of wood. Without this awareness and knowing, nothing would exist.

"Why does the Tathagata say this is not my mind? I am startled and frightened and not one member of the great assembly is without doubt. I only hope that the World Honored One will regard us with great compassion and instruct those who have not yet awakened."

Commentary:

After listening to the Buddha's explanation, Ananda still didn't understand. He still wanted to debate the issue. **Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, I am the Buddha's favorite cousin."** He said, "I am the Buddha's youngest and most favored cousin, and the Buddha loves me dearly. As I stand before the Buddha I am like a child." The word "favorite" means that the Buddha let him have his own way. He didn't try to control him. Ananda could do whatever he pleased. **It is because my mind loved the Buddha that I was led to leave the home-life.** Ananda says that it was his mind that loved the Buddha's thirty-two hallmarks. The Buddha's face is like the clear full moon, and like a thousand suns emitting light. His hallmarks are exquisite. "So the Buddha told me to leave home, and as soon as he suggested it I agreed, because I loved his adorning hallmarks and characteristics." Ananda hadn't forgotten that the causes and conditions for his leaving home were his seeing the Buddha's thirty-two hallmarks.

It is my mind that not only makes offerings to the Tathagata – my mind makes offerings not only to you, World Honored One – **but also, in passing through lands as many as the grains of sand in the Ganges river to serve all Buddhas and good, wise advisors –** when Ananda says "serve," he means "I go to attend on all Buddhas, to make offerings to all Buddhas, to bow to all Buddhas, and I do the same for teachers of vast knowledge and experience. **And in martialing great courage to practice every difficult aspect of the dharma, I always use this mind.** I do all the things other people cannot do. People fear suffering, but I am not afraid to suffer. I look after Buddhas and tend to their every need. I bear what others cannot bear and practice what others cannot practice, and what I use in doing so is my mind. The reason I am able to develop merit and virtue by making offerings to the Triple Jewel is because I use this mind. **Even if I am slandering the dharma and eternally withdrawing my good roots, it would also be because of this mind.** Even if you say that I am slandering the Dharma to speak this way – even if I were to retreat and cut off my

good roots to the point that there were none left, I would still be using this mind. This sentence can alternately be said to mean that Ananda is supposing that if he ever were to slander the Dharma, he still thinks it would be his mind that would be doing it. **If this is not my mind, then I have no mind, and I am the same as a clod of earth or a piece of wood. Without this awareness and knowing, nothing would exist.** Ananda is really flustered to be speaking in this way. "I've become someone without a mind. I'm no different from dirt or wood. I have no mind. If I am separate from this conscious mind that makes discriminations, then what else is there? There isn't anything at all. My present ability to hear the sutra and listen to Dharma is a function solely of this mind. Beyond that I have nothing.

"Why does the Tathagata say this is not my mind? I am startled and frightened and not one member of the great assembly is without doubt. Now I am really alarmed. You've talked me right out of my mind. And not only myself: I believe everyone has doubts regarding this, and the pain of my fears and the assembly's doubts is unbearable.**"** By "doubts" is meant that they had not understood the doctrine and had questions about it. Why did Ananda say that the great assembly had doubts, but that he himself was alarmed? It's that all the others in the assembly were onlookers and so they had not thought to take the situation personally and put themselves in his place. They simply took note of the principles. But Ananda was being addressed personally, so when Shakyamuni Buddha said he didn't have a mind he was shocked. "No mind? That's too much. Next thing you know I won't have a life either."

Ananda says that everyone else who was listening to his dialogue with the Buddha had doubts about what they heard, but in fact that too was a deduction Ananda made with his conscious mind. "Probably they haven't understood either," he thought. He didn't realize that the great Bodhisattvas who were present, although they hadn't said anything, had long since understood. Within his small frame of reference Ananda was deducing things

about those whose frame of reference was much greater. Actually, however, I believe that members of the assembly such as Manjushri Bodhisattva, Gwan Yin Bodhisattva, and Great Strength Bodhisattva, couldn't have had any doubts.

"I only hope that the World Honored One will regard us with great compassion and instruct those who have not yet awakened." Compassion can pull people out of suffering. "Please rescue each of us from our distress," Ananda says, "and teach those of us who have not understood this doctrine so that we can understand."

M2 Tathagata comforts him.
N1 He bestows the profound meaning of the teaching.

Sutra:

Then the World Honored One gave instruction to Ananda and the great assembly, wishing to cause their minds to enter the state of patience with the non-production of dharmas.

Commentary:

Then the World Honored One: at the time that Ananda asked the Buddha to instruct those who had not yet awakened, Shakyamuni Buddha pitied his young cousin and felt a loving protectiveness for him. So he **gave instruction to Ananda and the great assembly, wishing to cause their minds to enter the state of patience with the non-production of dharmas.** What is meant by the "patience with the non-production of dharmas"? There are three kinds of patience: patience with production; patience with dharmas; and patience with the non-production of dharmas, where there is neither production nor any dharmas. No dharmas are and no dharmas cease to be. When you attain patience with the non-production of dharmas, you see that in each of the four sagely and six ordinary Dharmarealms not even the minutest dharma arises and not even the minutest dharma is destroyed. The four sagely Dharmarealms are beyond the realm of desire, the realm of form and the realm of formlessness, while the six ordinary realms are within the three realms but in none of them is there any production

or extinction; and yet the fundamental substance of every dharma is in a state of unmoving suchness. Because they are in a state of unmoving suchness, there is neither production nor extinction.

Before you understand you think: "Oh no, there is no production or extinction, and all the ten thousand dharmas vanish!" A fear arises in your heart; you can't bear the idea of it. But if you actually experience the state of non-production and non-extinction, in fact it will not seem at all unusual and you will be able to bear it, because you attain patience with the non-production of dharmas. Then you will have gained a mutual response with the Way.

A mutual response occurs when you are about to attain enlightenment but have not yet done so. When the mutual response occurs, the only thing you can do is cherish it in your heart. You yourself know, but you cannot go around telling people about it. It is inexpressible. That is what is called patience with the non-production of dharmas. When you can see that the mountains, the rivers, the earth, and all that grows forth from them are things within your self-nature; that the three realms are only the mind, and that the myriad dharmas are only consciousness; once you attain that state, then everything, every dharma, is devoid of production and extinction. Everything you see – the mountains, the rivers, the earth, the plants – are all one true appearance. That is patience with the non-production of dharmas. Before you have truly realized and truly obtained this state, you must be patient. You must be able to bear it. That too is patience with the non-production of dharmas.

Now the Buddha spoke to the assembly, wishing to cause everyone there and all living beings to attain the state of patience with the non-production of dharmas.

N2 He often speaks of the wonderful mind.

Sutra:

From the lion's seat he rubbed Ananda's crown and said to him, "The Tathagata has often said that all dharmas that arise are only manifestations of the mind. All causes and effects, the

worlds as many as fine motes of dust, come into being because of the mind.

Commentary:

From the lion's seat: this does not mean that the Buddha mounted a lion and sat on it, or that his seat was carved in the shape of a lion. The Buddha's speaking dharma is like the roar of a lion, and so the place where the Buddha sits is called the lion's seat. **He rubbed Ananda's crown**. The Buddha rubbed the top of Ananda's head with his hand. In Buddhism, rubbing the crown is a gesture which represents the power of the utmost compassionate love to attract living beings and draw them in. **And said to him, "The Tathagata has often said that all dharmas that arise are only manifestations of the mind.** I, the Tathagata, have often said in the past that every single dharma, whether worldly or transcendental, is manifested entirely from within our minds. **All causes and effects**: cause upon cause, effect after effect, all that occur in this world and throughout the **worlds as many as fine motes of dust come into being because of the mind."** They are all brought because of our minds. So the ancients of China had a saying:

> *If a man recognizes his mind*
> *There's not an inch of dirt left on earth.*

What is there? Where did it go? That's the Ch'an school's way of expressing the irony of the ineffable. Unfortunately, we have not recognized our minds, and so the great earth is still a big mound of dirt.

N3 He confirms that the true mind has substance.

Sutra:

"Ananda, when all the things in the world, including blades of grass and strands of silk thread, are examined at their fundamental source, each is seen to have substance and a nature, even empty space has a name and an appearance.

Commentary:

The Buddha called Ananda's name again, **"Ananda, when all the things in the world, including blades of grass and strands of silk thread, are examined at their fundamental source, each is seen to have substance and a nature, even empty space has a name and an appearance."** Absolutely everything in the world, including the mountains, the rivers, the earth, vegetation, and all the myriad appearances, even down to blades of grass or fine strands of silk thread, and even empty space, which still has the name "empty space" and has the appearance of empty space, all have a substance and a nature.

Sutra:

"How much the less could the clear, wonderful, pure bright mind, the essence of all thoughts, itself be without a substance?

Commentary:

How much the less could the wonderful pure mind have no substance? It, too, certainly has substance.

N4 He shows that the false consciousness has no substance.

Sutra:

"If you insist that the nature which knows and observes and is aware of distinctions is the mind, then apart from all forms, smells, tastes, and touches – apart from the workings of all the defiling objects – that mind should have its own complete nature.

Commentary:

If you insist – if you are determined to hold to all of your own fixed ideas, opinions, and deductions, as a miser hoards gold, saying **that the nature which knows and observes and is aware of distinctions is the mind, then apart from all forms, smells, tastes, and touches – apart from the workings of all the defiling objects – that mind should have its own complete nature.** If the mind which makes distinctions is the true mind, then it should exist

apart from any connection with forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, or dharmas. Although only four of the six sense objects are mentioned, all six are meant. If the conscious mind is indeed the true mind, then it should continue to exist as yet another complete nature beyond the experiences involving the six sense objects. There should be another mind besides the one that goes out the entrances of the six organs, the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

Is that the way it is? No, but the Buddha offers this hypothetical explanation in order to teach Ananda.

Sutra:

"And yet now, as you listen to my Dharma, it is because of sound that you are able to make distinctions.

Commentary:

Now the Buddha begins to explain that Ananda does not have a conscious mind that exists apart from its perceptions. **And yet now, as you listen to my Dharma, it is because of sound that you are able to make distinctions.** Ananda, you are here listening to me speak this dharma, and it is the sound that allows you to make distinctions. It is not the case that you can hear sounds when are no sounds.

Sutra:

"Even if you could extinguish all seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing, and maintain an inner composure, the shadows of your discrimination of dharmas would remain.

Commentary:

Even if you could extinguish all seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing, and maintain an inner composure; even if you could temporarily stop seeing, hearing, being aware, and knowing, it would simply be a state of emptiness. To attain it is a kind of skill. Once you do away with seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing, you can dwell in inner repose; it is very quiet, there isn't anything going on, you don't do anything. You are empty and free from care.

Adherents of outside ways consider this experience the highest one possible. They sit there and feel there is no self and no others, that everything is empty, that even their own bodies have disappeared, and they consider that to be real skill. That is what is meant by “maintaining an inner composure.” In fact there is a bit of attainment, some amount of *kung fu*, of spiritual skill, in keeping that composure. You experience light ease, a small amount of peace, and concentration. Since adherents of outside ways take this state to be the ultimate, they struggle to maintain it so it won’t be lost. They don’t want to lose their *kung fu*.

But actually, in that kind of state **the shadows of your discrimination of dharmas would remain.** The state of inner composure is still just a function of the sixth consciousness, the mind-consciousness; “dharmas” refers here to the objects of the mind. The first five consciousnesses vanish: those of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body. Vision and hearing aren’t directed outside; smells and tastes do not affect you, and the body is not influenced by an awareness of touch. But the sixth consciousness is called the solitary mind-consciousness because it functions even when the other consciousnesses are extinguished. Dreaming, for example, is a function of the mind-consciousness. The state of inner composure is another example. The five consciousnesses are extinguished, and you feel that seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are all gone, but you still have thought. There remain the subtle defiling objects of dharmas which are extremely hard to detect. They are subtle distinctions of the mind: the shadows of discriminations that fall on the mind. It is not a real state. When you have attained it, you feel that what is going on is very fine; but from the point of view of Buddhism, you haven’t even taken the first step. Don’t feel satisfied and think to yourself, “Oh, this is the skill that comes from sitting in Ch’an meditation.” Instead, you should continue to make progress. If you stop at that place, it is easy to fall into dull emptiness, where the seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are extinguished and there seems to be nothing at all; but dull emptiness is of no benefit in developing your Ch’an skill. The sixth

consciousness, the solitary mind-consciousness, is a place where it is easy to take the wrong road and go astray.

There are four aspects of the solitary mind-consciousness:

1. The solitary mind-consciousness in dissipation. This refers to our everyday mind which is scattered and makes discriminations.

2. The solitary mind-consciousness in insanity and incoherence. When someone goes crazy and speaks incoherently, the sixth consciousness is in an insane state, and it has control of him.

3. The solitary mind-consciousness in dreams. When you dream you see all kinds of colors and strange unusual things. That is the solitary mind-consciousness playing tricks.

4. The solitary mind-consciousness in samadhi. That is the state of inner composure that we are talking about here. The seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are all totally extinguished, but the solitary mind-consciousness in samadhi is still alive.

Sutra:

"I do not insist that you grant that it is not the mind. But examine your mind in minute detail to see whether there is a discriminating nature apart from the objects of sense. That would truly be your mind.

Commentary:

The Buddha further said to Ananda, "**I do not insist that you grant that it is not the mind.** I am not ordering you to agree with what I say. **But examine your mind in minute detail –** think about it carefully **– to see whether there is a discriminating nature apart from the objects of sense. That would truly be your mind.**" If when you are apart from the objects of sense you still have a discriminating nature, that would be your genuine mind.

Sutra:

"If this discriminating nature has no substance apart objects, then it is shadows of discriminations of objects of mind.

Commentary:

If this discriminating nature has no substance apart objects – if you cannot find the substance of your discriminating nature apart from the defiling objects of sense **– then it is shadows of discriminations of objects of mind.** It is not your true mind.

Sutra:

"The objects are not permanent, and when they pass out of existence, such a mind would be like hair on a tortoise or horns on a rabbit. In that case your Dharma-body would be extinguished along with it. Then who cultivates and attains patience with the non-production of dharmas?"

Commentary:

This passage of text explains the matter a little more clearly. **The objects are not permanent, and when they pass out of existence, such a mind would be like hair on a tortoise or horns on a rabbit.** If when you have a thought when confronted with an object, you say there is a discrimination and that that is your mind. If when confronted with an object you have a thought, when you aren't confronted with an object there is no thought. Sometimes objects disappear; they change and cease to be. Then you are not confronted with an object, and there is no thought, no discrimination. Then where is this mind you speak of? It is like hair on a tortoise or horns on a rabbit. When do tortoises grow hair? Never. When do rabbits grow horns? It's as if you didn't have a mind at all. **In that case your Dharma-body would be extinguished along with it.** Since you haven't any mind, your Dharma-body doesn't exist either. How can you have a Dharma-body without a mind? **Then who cultivates and attains patience with the non-production of dharmas?** What do you use to cultivate the Way and achieve enlightenment? If you have neither mind nor body, who awakens to patience with the non-production of dharmas?

Sutra:

At that point Ananda and everyone in the great assembly was speechless and at a total loss.

Commentary:

The Buddha explained that if the mind exists in the discriminations of external objects, then apart from objects there is no discrimination, so doesn't that mean there is no mind? If there is no mind there is no Dharma-body either. And with no mind and no Dharma-body, who is it that cultivates and attains the patience with the non-production of dharmas? Ananda and the members of the great assembly thought about it and saw that he was right. **At that point Ananda and everyone in the great assembly was speechless and at a total loss.** No one had anything to say. They just stared, but this time they didn't enter samadhi.

J3 Conclusion: the Tathagata reiterates the reason.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "There are cultivators in the world who, although they realize the nine successive stages of samadhi, do not achieve the extinction of outflows or become Arhats, all because they are attached to birth-and-death false thinking and mistake it for what is truly real. That is why now, although you are greatly learned, you have not realized the accomplishment of sagehood."

Commentary:

The Buddha said to Ananda. The Buddha saw that everyone was fidgeting and practically beside themselves, not knowing what to do. They had all lost their minds.

In Mencius, Confucius says of the mind:

> *Its goings out and comings in have no fixed time*
> *And its location is unknown.*
> *Just that is called the mind.*

You don't know what time it leaves, you don't know when it returns, and you don't know where it went. Probably that is the mind. However, the mind Confucius speaks of is also the false-thinking not the true mind. How could the true mind go out and enter? It doesn't have any exits or entrances.

Mencius also said:

When a person's chickens and dogs get loose
he knows he should go look for them,
But when his mind escapes
he doesn't know that he should search for it.

Here, too, he is talking about the mind which strikes up false thoughts from morning to night, running east, running west, running back and forth. He doesn't know enough to watch over his own mind, to tell it not to run down so many roads in vain. I've said your false-thinking mind allows you to be in New York in the space of a thought with no need to spend money on an airplane or train ticket; and you can play on the Brooklyn Bridge without bothering to take a bus; it's really a cheap way to travel. but it is a tremendous exertion for the mind. That is what it says in Mencius about the conscious mind, the mind that Ananda is familiar with. The conscious mind is impermanent. The true mind is permanent.

There are cultivators in the world who, although they realize the nine successive stages of samadhi: The nine successive stages of samadhi are the first, second, third, and fourth stages of dhyana; the four places of emptiness:

1. the place of the heaven of boundless emptiness;
2. the place of the heaven of boundless consciousness;
3. the place of the heaven of nothing whatsoever;
4. the place of the heaven of neither thought nor no thought

and the samadhi of the extinction of feeling and thought. They **do not achieve the extinction of outflows or become Arhats, all because they are attached to birth-and-death false thinking.**

Why do they cultivate and achieve the nine successive stages of samadhi and yet cannot obtain the penetration of the extinction of outflows and accomplish Arhatship? It is because they are attached to false thinking of birth and death and mistake it for what is truly real. They make the mistake of taking that false thinking to be true.

That is why now, although you are greatly learned, you have not realized the accomplishment of sagehood. By this time Ananda had reached the first stage of Arhatship, so why does the Buddha say nevertheless that, despite the advantages that come with erudition, Ananda hasn't realized the accomplishment of sagehood? The Buddha means Ananda has not obtained the penetration of the extinction of outflows. He is not devoid of outflows. In the Small Vehicle, the first stage of Arhatship is considered to be a level of Sagehood, but among Bodhisattvas it is not.

CHAPTER 6

Ananda Repents and Seeks the Truth

I2 He reveals the true nature that is inherent and causes him to see the substance of the Tathagata's treasury.
J1 Ananda renounces the false and seeks the true.
K1 He is sorrowful and repentant.

Sutra:

When Ananda heard that, he again wept sorrowfully, placed his five limbs on the ground, knelt on both knees, put his palms together, and said to the Buddha, "Since I followed the Buddha and left home, what I have done is to rely on the Buddha's awesome spirit. I have often thought, 'There is no reason for me to toil at cultivation' expecting that the Tathagata would bestow samadhi upon me. I never realized that he could not stand in for me in body and mind. Thus, I lost my original mind and although my body has left the home-life, my mind has not entered the Way. I am like the poor son who renounced his father and roamed around.

Commentary:

The Buddha has said that because Ananda was obstructed by his learning he had not realized sagehood. He had neglected samadhi and concentrated on acquiring erudition. **When Ananda heard that, he again wept sorrowfully.** Why did he cry? He realized he

had been wasting his time, and the fact that he had not attained sagehood was truly pitiful. So he burst into tears. Then, too, the Buddha had instructed him about his true mind, and feeling very grateful to the Buddha for that, he was moved to tears.

He **placed his five limbs on the ground**. Ananda then placed his hands, feet, and head on the ground. After he bowed deeply this way he did not rise but **knelt on both knees, put his palms together, and said to the Buddha**.

Ananda was crying and talking at the same time, like a child who goes out to play and gets beaten up, and runs crying home to his parents to tell how he's been bullied. Now it is as if Ananda had taken a beating. What kind of beating? He's lost his basic frame of reference. As he explains it, **"Since I followed the Buddha and left home, what I have done is to rely on the Buddha's awesome spirit."** Ananda was the Buddha's attendant, doing such things as helping straighten the Buddha's robe when he ascends the high seat. He left home, but as I mentioned before, one can leave the worldly home, the home of the three realms, and the home of affliction, and Ananda had left only the worldly home. He still hadn't left the other two. Now Ananda confesses that, although he has left home and bowed to the Buddha as his teacher, still hasn't changed his way of thinking. What was that? He relied on the Buddha's awesome virtue. He thought, "As, I have the Buddha for a cousin. Who else in the whole world has the Buddha for a cousin?" He was extremely arrogant. He thought he something both powerful and influential to depend on. He relied on the Buddha's awesome virtue and spiritual penetrations.

"I have often thought, 'There is no reason for me to toil at cultivation' expecting that the Tathagata would bestow samadhi upon me." He thought to himself, "I have the Buddha for a cousin, I don't have to cultivate. I don't have to go through the bitterness and suffering of cultivation. Why not? Because my cousin had become a Buddha, why should I have to cultivate? The Buddha can give me samadhi-power." Ananda thought it wasn't

necessary for one to cultivate samadhi-power oneself. The Buddha could just give it to him. Think it over. Isn't that naive?

"I never realized that he could not stand in for me in body and mind." Ananda says. I believe that none of us could think like that. We all know that one cannot stand in for another. But Ananda says that he really didn't know that the Buddha's body is the Buddha's and his body was his body, and that the Buddha's mind is the Buddha's mind and his mind was his mind. We cannot substitute for one another. The Buddha cannot represent Ananda in body and mind and he cannot represent the Buddha in body and mind. He didn't know that he himself had to cultivate samadhi-power.

"Thus, I lost my original mind. Because of that I took a great loss.**"** Ananda admits. **"And although my body has left the home-life" –** that is, he has become a monk **– "my mind has not entered the Way." –** that is, he has not obtained samadhi-power.

"I am like the poor son who renounced his father and roamed around." Ananda is referring, by way of analogy, to the case of an extremely wealthy elder who enjoyed many blessings. He had a son who didn't make use of his father's assets, but went out into the world to suffer poverty. What Ananda means is, "I followed the Buddha to leave home but I didn't cultivate the Way. Because lack samadhi-power, I'm a poor son. Actually, I could have taken on the Buddha's family business, but, without any samadhi-power, I still don't have the authority to receive the Dharma riches amassed as a result of the Buddha's merit and virtue. So Ananda sobbed grievously, just like a child.

Sutra:

"Therefore, today I realize that although I am greatly learned, if I do not cultivate, it is the same as if I had not learned anything; just as someone who only speaks of food will never get full.

Commentary:

Therefore, today I realize: I just now realize this. I did not know before. **Although I am greatly learned, if I do not cultivate, it is the same as if I had not learned anything.** If I simply know a lot of things but don't put them into practice I will be like a stone man who can talk but not act. In other words, Ananda could remember things, he was widely learned and had a good memory, but he had no skill, no *kung fu* when it came to actual practice. He had never actually done it. If he does not put his learning into practice, it is the same as if he didn't know anything at all.

Just as someone who only speaks of food will never get full. It's like someone who continually talks about things to eat. For instance people who like vegetarian food say, "Let's make vegetable dumplings, they're really good." Or "Let's make oil cakes as they do in Manchuria, they're even better."

Those who eat meat say, "Such and such a Chinese restaurant is the best in town, the food there is really good. Let's go have Chinese food." Americans like to eat Chinese food. So they discuss the various dishes by name, but just speaking about them and never getting around to eating them is no way to get full. There's another saying:

Every day you count others money
but not half a cent of it is yours.
Not cultivating in accord with Dharma
amounts to the same thing.

It doesn't matter what dharmas you know, if you don't cultivate the Way, that's being the same as someone who counts other people's money. You have no share in it. If you don't actually go and cultivate, there will be no result from your efforts.

K2 He reveals his confusion and seeks instruction.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, now we all are bound by two obstructions and as a consequence do not perceive the still, eternal nature of the mind. I only hope the Tathagata will take pity on us poor and destitute ones and disclose the wonderful bright mind, and open my Way-eye."

Commentary:

Ananda again called, **"World Honored One, now we all are bound by two obstructions."** Everyone of us in the great assembly is tied up by two obstructions. The first is the obstacle of affliction. The second is the obstacle of what is known. The obstacle of affliction arises with the attachment to self. The obstacle of what is known arises with the attachment to dharmas. As to the obstacle what is known, if you think, "I know a lot," that is an obstruction. It is not that the more people study things the more their knowledge increases; rather, the more they study the more they are obstructed by what they know. How is knowledge an obstruction? It makes people arrogant. "Take a look at me. I know things that none of you know. I am way beyond you. I can't even be compared to you. All of you are ignorant. But as for me, why, my learning ability stands second to none in this world; it is rare even in the heavens, how much the less can it be found on earth." As soon that arrogance arises, it is the obstruction of what is known.

With the attachment to self comes the obstruction of afflictions. No matter what comes up you cannot see through it, you cannot let it go, and so you become attached to it. And once the attachment arises, the affliction follows right along. That's the obstruction of affliction.

These are the two kinds of obstructions which Ananda says have bound up the members of the great assembly. "Bound" means that they have not obtained liberation. They cannot get free because they have these two kinds of obstructions.

"And as a consequence do not perceive the still, eternal nature of the mind. I don't know the tranquil, unmoving, permanently abiding nature of my mind. Now, because I do not understand this doctrine. **I only hope the Tathagata will take pity on us poor and destitute ones and disclose the wonderful bright mind, and open my Way-eye.** Pity me, pity me." He's still relying on the Buddha. He is still not standing on his own. "Poor and destitute" means they had not obtained the Dharma-wealth of the Shurangama Samadhi.

Ananda wants the Buddha to take pity on him and show him the wonderful, bright true mind and cause him to soon open his Way-eye, so that his wisdom can increase and he can accomplish sagehood. The essential thing is to accomplish sagehood.

J2 The Tathagata manifests the ultimate true substance.
K1 He displays light and promises to explain.

Sutra:

Then from the character wan 卍 [signifying "myriad virtues"] on his chest, the Tathagata poured forth precious light. Radiant with hundreds of thousands of colors, the brilliant light simultaneously pervaded everywhere throughout the ten directions to Buddha-realms as many as fine motes of dust, anointing the crowns of every Tathagata in all the jeweled Buddhalands of the ten directions. Then it swept back to Ananda and all in the great assembly.

Commentary:

Earlier in the sutra the Buddha emitted light from his face – a blazing light as brilliant as a hundred thousand suns. What did it represent? It represented the breaking up of the false: the false-thinking mind. Now he again emits light, this time from the insignia wan "myriad" on his chest. It represents the disclosing of the true: the true mind.

Then from the character wan 卍 [signifying "myriad virtues"] on his chest, the Tathagata poured forth precious

light. You can see the character wan on Buddha images. It represents the adornment of the myriad virtues, since the Buddha's virtuous practices have attained perfection. **Radiant with hundreds of thousands of colors, the brilliant light simultaneously pervaded everywhere throughout the ten directions to Buddha-realms as many as fine motes of dust.** The character wan poured forth precious light which radiated back and forth. It was an iridescent, shimmering light, with hundreds of thousands of colors, and it shone back and forth, pervading not only the Saha world, but all the Buddhalands simultaneously. Then it anointed **the crowns of every Tathagata in all the jeweled Buddhalands of the ten directions.** It illumined the crowns of Buddhas in as many Buddha-countries as there are fine motes of dust; it was as if their crowns reflected one another's light. **Then it swept back to Ananda and all in the great assembly.** After it illumined the Tathagatas of the ten directions, the Buddha's light returned and illumined Ananda's crown, and the crowns of all the great Bodhisattvas, great Arhats, great bhikshus, the king, the officials, and the elder in the dharma assembly. The Buddha emitted this kind of light as a sign to make everyone understand the pure nature and bright substance of the permanently dwelling true mind.

Sutra:

And said to Ananda, "I will now erect the great Dharma banner for you, to cause all living beings in the ten directions to obtain the wondrous subtle secret, the pure nature, the bright mind, and to attain the pure eye.

Commentary:

And said to Ananda, "I will now erect the great Dharma banner for you, to cause all living beings in the ten directions to obtain the wondrous subtle secret." The Buddha said to Ananda – referring to himself as "I" – I will hoist a great Dharma banner, not only for your sake but for the sake of all living beings in the ten directions, so that they may obtain the most extremely wonderful and infinitely subtle cause, that is, the secret cause mentioned in the

title of the sutra. It is secret because it is not known to most people before the Buddha has pointed it out to them, just like a vein of gold which has not been discovered by geologists: most people don't know it is there. Once the gold is discovered, once the geologists arrive at the spot, investigate it and realize there is a deposit of gold there, then it can be mined. The secret cause is the same way.

I will cause you to obtain **the pure nature, the bright mind, and to attain the pure eye**. The nature is pure and clear, the mind is luminous. Because your mature is pure and your mind bright, you attain the pure eye, which is the Way-eye that Ananda has just asked the Buddha to open for him. It is also called the wisdom-eye. "Pure" means to be free of even the slightest defilement; it indicates that the vision of the wisdom-eye sees principles very clearly and truly. If you have the pure eye, you will be unobstructed and able to understand any principle.

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When Buddhism first came to China from India, one of the most important tasks required for its establishment was the translation of the Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Chinese. This work involved a great many people, such as the renowned monk National Master Kumarajiva (fifth century), who led an assembly of over 800 people to work on the translation of the Tripitaka (Buddhist canon) for over a decade. Because of the work of individuals such as these, nearly the entire Buddhist Tripitaka of over a thousand texts exists to the present day in Chinese.

Now the banner of the Buddha's Teachings is being firmly planted in Western soil, and the same translation work is being done from Chinese into English. Since 1970, the Buddhist Text Translation Society (BTTS) has been making a paramount contribution toward this goal. Aware that the Buddhist Tripitaka is a work of such magnitude that its translation could never be entrusted to a single person, the BTTS, emulating the translation assemblies of ancient times, does not publish a work until it has passed through four committees for primary translation, revision, editing, and certification. The leaders of these committees are Bhikshus (monks) and Bhikshunis (nuns) who have devoted their lives to the study and practice of the Buddha's teachings. For this reason, all of the works of the BTTS put an emphasis on what the principles of the Buddha's teachings mean in terms of actual practice and not simply hypothetical conjecture.

The translations of canonical works by the Buddhist Text Translation Society are accompanied by extensive commentaries by the Venerable Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua.

BTTS Publications

Buddhist Sutras. Amitabha Sutra, Dharma Flower (Lotus) Sutra, Flower Adornment (Avatamsaka) Sutra, Heart Sutra & Verses without a Stand, Shurangama Sutra, Sixth Patriarch Sutra, Sutra in Forty-two Sections, Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva, Vajra Prajna Paramita (Diamond) Sutra.

Commentarial Literature. Buddha Root Farm, City of 10000 Buddhas Recitation Handbook, Filiality: The Human Source, Herein Lies the Treasure-trove, Listen to Yourself Think Everything Over, Shastra on the Door to Understanding the Hundred Dharmas, Song of Enlightenment, The Ten Dharma Realms Are Not beyond a Single Thought, Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma, Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma during the 1993 Trip to Taiwan, Water Mirror Reflecting Heaven.

Biographical. In Memory of the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua, Pictorial Biography of the Venerable Master Hsü Yün, Records of High Sanghans, Records of the Life of the Venerable Master Hsüan Hua, Three Steps One Bow, World Peace Gathering, News from True Cultivators, Open Your Eyes Take a Look at the World, With One Heart Bowing to the City of 10000 Buddhas.

Children's Books. Cherishing Life, Human Roots: Buddhist Stories for Young Readers.

Musics, Novels and Brochures. Songs for Awakening, Awakening, The Three Cart Patriarch, City of 10000 Buddhas Color Brochure, Celebrisi's Journey, Heng Ch'au's Journal.

The Buddhist Monthly–Vajra Bodhi Sea is a monthly journal of orthodox Buddhism which has been published by the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, formerly known as the Sino-American Buddhist Association, since 1970. Each issue contains the most recent translations of the Buddhist canon by the Buddhist Text Translation Society. Also included in each issue are a biography of a great Patriarch of Buddhism from the ancient past, sketches of the lives of contemporary monastics and lay-followers around the world, articles on practice, and other material. The journal is bilingual, Chinese and English

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The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association

Mission

The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association (formerly the Sino-American Buddhist Association) was founded by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua in the United States of America in 1959. Taking the Dharma Realm as its scope, the Association aims to disseminate the genuine teachings of the Buddha throughout the world. The Association is dedicated to translating the Buddhist canon, propagating the Orthodox Dharma, promoting ethical education, and bringing benefit and happiness to all beings. Its hope is that individuals, families, the society, the nation, and the entire world will, under the transforming influence of the Buddhadharma, gradually reach the state of ultimate truth and goodness.

The Founder

The Venerable Master, whose names were An Tse and To Lun, received the Dharma name Hsuan Hua and the transmission of Dharma from Venerable Master Hsu Yun in the lineage of the Wei Yang Sect. He was born in Manchuria, China, at the beginning of the century. At nineteen, he entered the monastic order and dwelt in a hut by his mother's grave to practice filial piety. He meditated, studied the teachings, ate only one meal a day, and slept sitting up. In 1948 he went to Hong Kong, where he established the Buddhist Lecture Hall and other Way-places. In 1962 he brought the Proper Dharma to the West, lecturing on several dozen Mahayana Sutras in the United States. Over the years, the Master established more than twenty monasteries of Proper Dharma under the auspices of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association and the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. He also founded centers for the translation of the Buddhist canon and for education to spread the influence of the Dharma in the East and West. The Master manifested the stillness in the United States in 1995. Through his lifelong, selfless dedication to teaching living beings with wisdom and compassion, he influenced countless people to change their faults and to walk upon the pure, bright path to enlightenment.

Dharma Propagation, Buddhist Text Translation, and Education

The Venerable Master Hua's three great vows after leaving the home-life were (1) to propagate the Dharma, (2) to translate the Buddhist Canon, and (3) to promote education. In order to make these vows a reality, the Venerable Master based himself on the Three Principles and the Six Guidelines. Courageously facing every hardship, he founded monasteries, schools, and centers in the West, drawing in living beings and teaching them on a vast scale. Over the years, he founded the following institutions:

The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas and Its Branches

In propagating the Proper Dharma, the Venerable Master not only trained people but also founded Way-places where the Dharma wheel could turn and living beings could be saved. He wanted to provide cultivators with pure places to practice in accord with the Buddha's regulations. Over the years, he founded many Way-places of Proper Dharma. In the United States and Canada, these include the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas; Gold Mountain Monastery; Gold Sage Monastery; Gold Wheel Monastery; Gold Summit Monastery; Gold Buddha Monastery; Avatamsaka Monastery; Long Beach Monastery; the City of the Dharma Realm; Berkeley Buddhist Monastery; Avatamsaka Hermitage; and Blessings, Prosperity, and Longevity Monastery. In Taiwan, there are the Dharma Realm Buddhist Books Distribution Association, Dharma Realm Monastery, and Amitabha Monastery. In Malaysia, there are Zi Yun Dong Monastery, Deng Bi An Monastery, and Lotus Vihara. In Hong Kong, there are the Buddhist Lecture Hall and Cixing Monastery.

Purchased in 1974, the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is the hub of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association. The City is located in Talmage, Mendocino County, California, 110 miles north of San Francisco. Eighty of the 488 acres of land are in active use. The remaining acreage consists of meadows, orchards, and woods. With over seventy large buildings containing over 2,000 rooms, blessed with serenity and fresh, clean air, it is the first large Buddhist monastic community in the United States. It is also an international center for the Proper Dharma.

Although the Venerable Master Hua was the Ninth Patriarch in the Weiyang Sect of the Chan School, the monasteries he founded emphasize all of the five main practices of Mahayana Buddhism (Chan meditation, Pure Land,

esoteric, Vinaya (moral discipline), and doctrinal studies). This accords with the Buddha's words: "The Dharma is level and equal, with no high or low." At the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, the rules of purity are rigorously observed. Residents of the City strive to regulate their own conduct and to cultivate with vigor. Taking refuge in the Proper Dharma, they lead pure and selfless lives, and attain peace in body and mind. The Sutras are expounded and the Dharma wheel is turned daily. Residents dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to making Buddhism flourish. Monks and nuns in all the monasteries take one meal a day, always wear their precept sash, and follow the Three Principles:

Freezing, we do not scheme.
Starving, we do not beg.
Dying of poverty, we ask for nothing.
According with conditions, we do not change.
Not changing, we accord with conditions.
We adhere firmly to our three great principles.
We renounce our lives to do the Buddha's work.
We take the responsibility to mold our own destinies.
We rectify our lives to fulfill the Sanghan's role.
Encountering specific matters,
we understand the principles.
Understanding the principles,
we apply them in specific matters.
We carry on the single pulse of
the Patriarchs' mind-transmission.

The monasteries also follow the Six Guidelines: not contending, not being greedy, not seeking, not being selfish, not pursuing personal advantage, and not lying.

International Translation Institute

The Venerable Master vowed to translate the Buddhist Canon (Tripitaka) into Western languages so that it would be widely accessible throughout the world. In 1973, he founded the International Translation Institute on Washington Street in San Francisco for the purpose of translating Buddhist scriptures into English and other languages. In 1977, the Institute was merged into Dharma Realm Buddhist University as the Institute for the Translation of Buddhist Texts. In 1991, the Venerable Master purchased a large building in

Burlingame (south of San Francisco) and established the International Translation Institute there for the purpose of translating and publishing Buddhist texts. To date, in addition to publishing over one hundred volumes of Buddhist texts in Chinese, the Association has published more than one hundred volumes of English, French, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Japanese translations of Buddhist texts, as well as bilingual (Chinese and English) editions. Audio and video tapes also continue to be produced. The monthly journal Vajra Bodhi Sea, which has been in circulation for nearly thirty years, has been published in bilingual (Chinese and English) format in recent years.

In the past, the difficult and vast mission of translating the Buddhist canon in China was sponsored and supported by the emperors and kings themselves. In our time, the Venerable Master encouraged his disciples to cooperatively shoulder this heavy responsibility, producing books and audio tapes and using the medium of language to turn the wheel of Proper Dharma and do the great work of the Buddha. All those who aspire to devote themselves to this work of sages should uphold the Eight Guidelines of the International Translation Institute:

1. One must free oneself from the motives of personal fame and profit.
2. One must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.
3. One must refrain from aggrandizing one's work and denigrating that of others.
4. One must not establish oneself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with one's fault-finding.
5. One must take the Buddha-mind as one's own mind.
6. One must use the wisdom of Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles.
7. One must request Virtuous Elders of the ten directions to certify one's translations.
8. One must endeavor to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

These are the Venerable Master's vows, and participants in the work of translation should strive to realize them.

Instilling Goodness Elementary School, Developing Virtue Secondary School, Dharma Realm Buddhist University

"Education is the best national defense." The Venerable Master Hua saw clearly that in order to save the world, it is essential to promote good education. If we want to save the world, we have to bring about a complete change in people's minds and guide them to cast out unwholesomeness and to pursue goodness. To this end the Master founded Instilling Goodness Elementary School in 1974, and Developing Virtue Secondary School and Dharma Realm Buddhist University in 1976.

In an education embodying the spirit of Buddhism, the elementary school teaches students to be filial to parents, the secondary school teaches students to be good citizens, and the university teaches such virtues as humaneness and righteousness. Instilling Goodness Elementary School and Developing Virtue Secondary School combine the best of contemporary and traditional methods and of Western and Eastern cultures. They emphasize moral virtue and spiritual development, and aim to guide students to become good and capable citizens who will benefit humankind. The schools offer a bilingual (Chinese/English) program where boys and girls study separately. In addition to standard academic courses, the curriculum includes ethics, meditation, Buddhist studies, and so on, giving students a foundation in virtue and guiding them to understand themselves and explore the truths of the universe. Branches of the schools (Sunday schools) have been established at branch monasteries with the aim of propagating filial piety and ethical education.

Dharma Realm Buddhist University, whose curriculum focuses on the Proper Dharma, does not merely transmit academic knowledge. It emphasizes a foundation in virtue, which expands into the study of how to help all living beings discover their inherent nature. Thus, Dharma Realm Buddhist University advocates a spirit of shared inquiry and free exchange of ideas, encouraging students to study various canonical texts and use different experiences and learning styles to tap their inherent wisdom and fathom the meanings of those texts. Students are encouraged to practice the principles they have understood and apply the Buddhadharma in their lives, thereby nurturing their wisdom and virtue. The University aims to produce outstanding individuals of high moral character who will be able to bring benefit to all sentient beings.

Sangha and Laity Training Programs

In the Dharma-ending Age, in both Eastern and Western societies there are very few monasteries that actually practice the Buddha's regulations and strictly uphold the precepts. Teachers with genuine wisdom and understanding, capable of guiding those who aspire to pursue careers in Buddhism, are very rare. The Venerable Master founded the Sangha and Laity Training Programs in 1982 with the goals of raising the caliber of the Sangha, perpetuating the Proper Dharma, providing professional training for Buddhists around the world on both practical and theoretical levels, and transmitting the wisdom of the Buddha.

The Sangha Training Program gives monastics a solid foundation in Buddhist studies and practice, training them in the practical affairs of Buddhism and Sangha management. After graduation, students will be able to assume various responsibilities related to Buddhism in monasteries, institutions, and other settings. The program emphasizes a thorough knowledge of Buddhism, under-standing of the scriptures, earnest cultivation, strict observance of precepts, and the development of a virtuous character, so that students will be able to propagate the Proper Dharma and perpetuate the Buddha's wisdom. The Laity Training Program offers courses to help laypeople develop correct views, study and practice the teachings, and understand monastic regulations and ceremonies, so that they will be able to contribute their abilities in Buddhist organizations.

Let Us Go Forward Together

In this Dharma-ending Age when the world is becoming increasingly dangerous and evil, the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, in consonance with its guiding principles, opens the doors of its monasteries and centers to those of all religions and nationalities. Anyone who is devoted to humaneness, righteousness, virtue, and the pursuit of truth, and who wishes to understand him or herself and help humankind, is welcome to come study and practice with us. May we together bring benefit and happiness to all living beings.

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Verse of Transference

May the merit and virtue accrued from this work,
Adorn the Buddha's Pure Lands,
Repaying four kinds of kindness above,
And aiding those suffering in the paths below.

May those who see and hear of this,
All bring forth the resolve for Bodhi,
And when this retribution body is over,
Be born together in ultimate bliss.

Dharma Protector Wei T’o Bodhisattva

The Shurangama Sutra

The Shurangama Sutra

Volume Two

a simple explanation by the

Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

English translation by the
Buddhist Text Translation Society

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Introduction

This is the second of eight volumes of the *Shurangama Sutra*, with commentaries from the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua.

Having just rescued Ananda from Matangi's daughter, the Buddha now endeavors to reveal to Ananda the true, perfect mind which all Buddhas reside in. Without discovering this true mind, Ananda will surely fall again in the future, since he has from the beginning been using the false mind to learn and cultivate.

To reveal the true mind, the Buddha chooses to discuss "The Seeing Nature". The Buddha demonstrates in great detail that the seeing nature does not move, cannot be destroyed, cannot be lost, is separate fom everything, does not intermingle, is not obstructed, is one with everything, trancends the ordinary, and finally, the genuine seeing is apart from seeing. The true mind is to be found in the seeing nature.

However, the Buddha's last explanation of the true mind, that the genuine seeing is apart from seeing, proofs to be too much for Ananda. Ananda reverently requests again for further instruction. In "The Two False Views", the Buddha then attempts to explain the reason why living beings lose their original true minds: it is due to the false views of individual and collective karma, which defines self and others. Wherever these views arise, the true mind will be as if lost.

Further, in “Mixing and Uniting”, the Buddha then attempts to break Ananda’s attachment to the idea that the true mind is to be found in the place where the mind mixes and unites with existence.

He first uses the seeing nature to demonstrate that the true mind does not mix and unite. Fearing that Ananda will then attach his true mind to that which does not mix and unite, the Buddha then quickly breaks his attachment by demonstrating that the seeing nature also mixes and unites with phenomena. This is compassionately done in hope that Ananda will abandon both mixing & uniting and non mixing & uniting.

To reveal the true by using the false mind is not easy, as the above testifies.

User's Guide

to the Shurangama Sutra series

Because of the length of the *Shurangama Sutra*, and the need to provide aid to various readers, the Sutra has been compiled into a series of 9 books: the "Sutra Text and Suppliments", and the remaining Volumes one to eight.

The "Sutra Text and Suppliments" contains:

1. the entire Sutra text, which is in excess of 2700 paragraphs;
2. the entire outline, which contains 1676 entries;
3. and a master index, which has index references for both the "Sutra Text and Suppliments" and the eight volumes.

Volumes one to eight contain:

1. the Sutra text, with commentaries;
2. the local outline entries;
3. and a local index.

Readers who wish to read or recite the Sutra in its entirety will find the "Sutra Text and Suppliments" very useful.

Those who wish to deeply study the Sutra with its commentaries will find volumes one to eight indispensable.

Exhortation to Protect and Propagate

by Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua

Within Buddhism, there are very many important sutras. However, the most important Sutra is the *Shurangama Sutra*. If there are places which have the *Shurangama Sutra*, then the Proper Dharma dwells in the world. If there is no *Shurangama Sutra*, then the Dharma Ending Age appears. Therefore, we Buddhist disciples, each and every one, must bring our strength, must bring our blood, and must bring our sweat to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*. In the *Sutra of the Ultimate Extinction of the Dharma*, it says very, very clearly that in the Dharma Ending Age, the *Shurangama Sutra* is the first to disappear, and the rest of the sutras disappear after it. If the *Shurangama Sutra* does not disappear, then the Proper Dharma Age is present. Because of that, we Buddhist disciples must use our lives to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*, must use vows and resolution to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*, and cause the *Shurangama Sutra* to be known far and wide, reaching every nook and cranny, reaching into each and every dust-mote, reaching out to the exhaustion of empty space and of the Dharma Realm. If we can do that, then there will be a time of Proper Dharma radiating great light.

Why would the *Shurangama Sutra* be destroyed? It is because it is too true. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's true body. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's sharira. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's true and actual stupa and shrine. Therefore, because

the *Shurangama Sutra* is so true, all the demon kings use all kinds of methods to destroy the *Shurangama Sutra*. They begin by starting rumors, saying that the *Shurangama Sutra* is phony. Why do they say the *Shurangama Sutra* is phony? It is because the *Shurangama Sutra* speaks too truly, especially in the sections on The Four Decisive Deeds, the Twenty-five Sages Describing Perfect Penetration, and the States of the Fifty Skandha Demons. Those of off-center persuasions and externally-oriented ways, weird demons and strange freaks, are unable to stand it. Consequently there are a good many senseless people who claim that the *Shurangama Sutra* is a forgery.

Now, the principles set forth in the *Shurangama Sutra* are on the one hand proper, and on the other in accord with principle, and the weird demons and strange freaks, those in various cults and sects, all cannot hide away their forms. Most senseless people, in particular unwise scholars and garbage-collecting professors "Tread upon the holy writ." With their extremely scant and partial understanding, they are confused and unclear, lacking real erudition and true and actual wisdom. That is why they falsely criticize. We who study the Buddhadharma should very deeply be aware of these circumstances. Therefore, wherever we go, we should bring up the *Shurangama Sutra*. Wherever we go, we should propagate the *Shurangama Sutra*. Wherever we go, we should introduce the *Shurangama Sutra* to people. Why is that? It is because we wish to cause the Proper Dharma long to dwell in the world.

If the *Shurangama Sutra* is regarded as true, then there is no problem. To verify its truth, let me say that if the *Shurangama Sutra* were phony, then I would willingly fall into the hells forever through all eternity—for being unable to recognize the Buddhadharma—for mistaking the false for true. If the *Shurangama Sutra* is true, then life after life in every time I make the vow to propagate the Great Dharma of the Shurangama, that I shall in every time and every place propagate the true principles of the Shurangama.

Everyone should pay attention to the following point. How could the *Shurangama Sutra* not have been spoken by the Buddha? No one else could have spoken the *Shurangama Sutra*. And so I hope that all those people who make senseless accusations will wake up fast and stop creating the causes for suffering in the Hell of Pulling Out Tongues. No matter who the scholar is, no matter what country students of the Buddhadharma are from, all should quickly mend their ways, admit their mistakes, and manage to change. There is no greater good than that. I can then say that all who look at the *Shurangama Sutra*, all who listen to the *Shurangama Sutra*, and all who investigate the *Shurangama Sutra*, will very quickly accomplish Buddhahood.

Composed by Gold Mountain Shramana Tripitaka Master Hua
Translated by Bhikshuni Heng Hsien
Reviewed by Shramanerika Heng Wen

The Eight Guidelines

of the Buddhist Text Translation Society

1. A volunteer must free him/herself from the motives of personal fame and profit.
2. A volunteer must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.
3. A volunteer must refrain from aggrandizing his/her work and denigrating that of others.
4. A volunteer must not establish him/herself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with his or her fault-finding.
5. A volunteer must take the Buddha-mind as his/her own mind.
6. A volunteer must use the wisdom of Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles.
7. A volunteer must request Virtuous Elders in the ten directions to certify his/her translations.
8. A volunteer must endeavour to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

Outline

of the Shurangama Sutra

The outline for the Shurangama Sutra was compiled by Dharma Master Yuan Ying, which categorizes the various parts of the Sutra text consisting of over 2,700 paragraphs to 1,676 entries.

These entries are presented in the form of a tree-like structure, dividing the various parts of the Sutra text into groups, those groupings being sub-divided further and further, thus providing a detailed break-down of the entire text.

Though the outline is not a prerequisite to reading the Sutra text and the accompanying commentaries, it serves as a useful tool for students of the Way who wish to deeply study the Sutra. Without this outline, students may find it difficult to refer to specific parts of the text.

Because of the size of the outline (and the Sutra), only outline entries which pertain to the Sutra text contained within this book is included.

For the outline of the entire Sutra, please refer to the “Sutra Text and Suppliments”, where the entire sutra text, outline, and index entries are all combined into one single volume.

K2 He displays the true nature. 1
- L1 He divides the nature of the organ and points straight to the true mind. 1
  - M1 He uses the false to reveal the true.. 1
    - N1 He shows that the seeing is the mind. 1
      - O1 He exhibits a dharma analogy. 1
      - O2 He states the dharma-analogy and investigates it. 2
      - O3 He makes clear that without eyes there is still seeing. 5
      - O4 He makes clear that seeing darkness is seeing. 6
      - O5 He states that the eye's seeing is the mind. 7
        - P1 He points out the fault in the eye's seeing. 7
        - P2 He concludes that in actual fact it is the mind that sees. 8
    - N2 He shows that the seeing does not move. 9
      - O1 Discussion of the assembly's hope for instruction. 9
      - O2 He determines the guest and dust. 10
        - P1 The Thus Come One asks about the ultimate source of enlightenment.. 10
        - P2 Purna answers that the Buddha sealed and certified him. 15
      - O3 He actually shows the non-movement. 20
        - P1 He shows the non-movement in relation to external states. 20
        - P2 He shows non-movement in relation to the internal body. 22
      - O4 He scolds them all for their mistaken recognition. 24
        - P1 He returns to the former guest-dust which was enlightened to. 24
        - P2 He enables them to see the emptiness of the invisible host. 25
        - P3 He upbraids them from grasping at the flowing and turning.. 25
    - N3 He shows that the seeing does not become extinct. 28
      - O1 The assembly considers this and asks for further instruction.. 28
      - O2 King Prasenajit tells his situation and makes a special request. 30
      - O3 The Thus Come One thoroughly shows that seeing is not extinguished. 33
        - P1 He shows that the body changes. 33
          - Q1 Discussion of the overall changes and eventual extinction. 33
          - Q2 A detailed examination of the change and extinction. 35

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R2 He examines in detail his change in appearance. . . . 37
R3 General conclusion that it must become extinct. . . . 40
P2 He points out that the seeing is not produced or extinguished. . . . 41
Q1 The question is fixed and he promises to explain. . . . 41
Q2 What he sees does not change. . . . 42
Q3 His ability to see is not extinguished. . . . 43
Q4 The King and the others are extremely happy. . . . 45
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O2 The Thus Come One explains it is because of upside-downness that he said it was lost . . . 47
P1 Then he uses an analogy of his arm being upside-down but not lost. . . . 47
Q1 First he determines the appearance of an upside-down arm. . . . 47
Q2 He then determines the appearance of a right-side up arm. . . . 47
Q3 He makes clear it is upside-down, not lost. . . . 48
P2 He fits the analogy to the fact that the mind is upside-down but not lost. . . . 48
Q1 He names the parts of the analogy. . . . 48
Q2 The body is devoid of upside-down and right-side up. . . . 49
Q3 Upside-down and right-side up come from the mind. . . . 50
R1 First the Thus Come One displays compassion and informs the assembly. . . . 50
R2 He uses former teaching to make clear the appearance of right-side up. . . . 50
R3 He scolds them for losing recognition of the appearance of right-side up. . . . 52
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O2 The power of the Thus Come One provides refutation and revelation. . . . 61
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Q1 He refutes the place of conditioned objective dharmas. . . . 61
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Q3 Points out that everything returns to something. . . . 67
P2 He reveals that the nature of seeing does not return to anything. . . . 68
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Q2 The Thus Come One reveals it in detail. . . . 69
R1 He points out by analogy that the essence of seeing is true. . . . 69
R2 He promises to show him what does not return to anything. . . . 70
R3 He shows how the eight appearances all return to something else. . . . 70
R4 He reveals that only the nature of seeing does not return to anything. . . . 75
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O4 He concludes that it is Ananda who is immersed in his own confusion. . . . 78
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O1 Ananda doubts the self-nature because of the unclear intermingling of material things and the seeing. . . . 80
O2 The Thus Come One divides material things and the seeing clearly to reveal the self-nature. . . . 81
P2 He tells him to select between them. . . . 90
P3 He distinguishes clearly between things and the seeing. . . . 91
Q1 He makes clear things are not seeing. . . . 91
Q2 He makes clear seeing is not things. . . . 94
Q3 He returns to discuss how seeing is not things. . . . 96
Q4 He returns to discuss how things are not the seeing. . . . 100
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釋迦牟尼文佛

Namo Original Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha

Verse for Opening a Sutra

The unsurpassed, profound, and wonderful Dharma,

Is difficult to encounter in hundreds of millions of eons,

I now see and hear it, receive and uphold it,

And I vow to fathom the Tathagata's true meaning.

CHAPTER 1

The Seeing Nature

K2 He displays the true nature.
L1 He divides the nature of the organ and points straight to the true mind.
M1 He uses the false to reveal the true.
N1 He shows that the seeing is the mind.
O1 He exhibits a dharma analogy.

Sutra:

"Ananda, you have told me that you saw my fist of bright light. How did it take the form of a fist? How did the fist become bright? By what means could you see it?"

Ananda replied, "The body of the Buddha is born of purity and cleanness, and, therefore, it assumes the color of Jambu River gold with deep red hues. Hence, it shone as brilliant and dazzling as a precious mountain. It was actually my eyes that saw the Buddha bend his five-wheeled fingers to form a fist which was shown to all of us."

Commentary:

The Buddha called again to Ananda: "**Ananda, you have told me that you saw my fist of bright light. How did it take the form of a fist? How did the fist become bright?** Tell me why my fist had light. **By what means could you see it?** What did you use to see it?"

Ananda replied, "**The body of the Buddha is born of purity and cleanness, and, therefore, it assumes the color of Jambu River gold with deep red hues. Hence, it shone as brilliant and dazzling as a precious mountain.**" The Buddha's entire body is the color of Jambu River gold. The Jambu river is located in Southern Jambudvipa. The gold found in this river has a slightly reddish cast to it. In Southern Jambudvipa there is a species of tree called the Jambu, and it is perhaps the stems of its leaves which turn to gold when they fall into the water. This kind of gold is much heavier than ordinary gold, and the Buddha's body is likened to it; like the color of Jambu river gold, the color of the Buddha's body is a combination of gold and red.

A body with that kind of appearance is produced from purity and therefore has light. The light exists because of that purity.

"**It was actually my eyes that saw**," Ananda says. "I really used my eyes to see it. The five-wheeled fingers were clenched as they were shown to people, and that is what made the appearance of a fist."

O2 He states the dharma-analogy and investigates it.

Sutra:

The Buddha told Ananda, "Today the Tathagata will tell you truly. That all those with wisdom are able to achieve enlightenment through the use of examples.

Commentary:

The Buddha told Ananda, "Today the Tathagata will tell you truly. Now I am going to tell you the absolute truth. Are you listening? **All those with wisdom are able to achieve enlightenment through the use of examples**. People who are wise like to use examples in order to attain enlightenment, because if you really have wisdom, you will understand ten things when you are told one thing. I say something one way and you deduce perhaps ten or a hundred things from it. That is to have genuine wisdom." Here "those with wisdom" does not mean people with genuine wisdom,

though, but people with ordinary wisdom which is neither superior nor inferior. Such people can become enlightened through the use of analogies. But if stupid people who lack wisdom are given an analogy, they don’t understand, and they say, “What does that mean?”

Seeing Is the Mind

Sutra:

"Ananda, take, for example, my fist: if I didn't have a hand, I couldn't make a fist. If you didn't have eyes, you couldn't see. If you apply the example of my fist to the case of your eyes, is the idea the same?"

Commentary:

"Ananda, take, for example, my fist: if I didn't have a hand, I couldn't make a fist. By the same token, **if you didn't have eyes, you couldn't see. If you apply the example of my fist to the case of your eyes, is the idea the same?** Are we talking about the same thing or not?" The Buddha asks Ananda.

Sutra:

Ananda said, "Yes, World Honored One. Since I can't see without my eyes, if one applies the example of the Buddha's fist to the case of your eyes, the idea is the same."

Commentary:

Ananda didn't take time to cogitate over it. He isn't thinking now. **Ananda said, "Yes, World Honored One. Since I can't see without my eyes, if one applies the example of the Buddha's fist to the case of your eyes, the idea is the same**. Yes, Buddha, if you compare these two cases, the idea is the same."

O3 He makes clear that without eyes there is still seeing.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, “You say it is the same, but that is not right. Why? If a person has no hand, his fist is gone forever. But one who is without eyes is not entirely devoid of sight.

Commentary:

Here the Buddha criticizes Ananda, telling him his idea is incorrect. **The Buddha said to Ananda, “You say it is the same, but that is not right”**. You say the example is the same in both cases. No. **Why? If a person has no hand, his fist is gone forever.** If someone doesn’t have a hand, he doesn’t have a fist either. **But one who is without eyes is not entirely devoid of sight.** But with someone else who has no eyes it is not the case that he cannot see anything. He can see.” People without eyes can see. Do you believe that?

Sutra:

“For what reason? Try consulting a blind man on the street: ‘What do you see?’

“Any blind man will certainly answer, ‘Now I see only black in front of my eyes. Nothing else meets my gaze.’

Commentary:

“**For what reason?** Why do I say that? **Try consulting a blind man on the street: ‘What do you see?’** Go out to the market and ask a blind man what he sees. **Any blind man will certainly answer, ‘Now I see only black in front of my eyes. Nothing else meets my gaze.** He’ll say that he doesn’t see anything but blackness.”

Sutra:

“The meaning is apparent: if he sees blackness in front of him, how could his seeing be considered ‘lost’?”

Commentary:

"**The meaning is apparent:** if you get the idea, if you take a look at what it means, **if he sees blackness in front of him, how could his seeing be considered 'lost'?** If you see blackness before you, your ability to see is not lost; it neither increases nor decreases."

O4 He makes clear that seeing darkness is seeing.

Sutra:

Ananda said, "The only thing blind people see in front of their eyes is blackness. How can that be seeing?"

Commentary:

Ananda reiterates the Buddha's example: a blind person has no use of his eyes and so sees only darkness. But according to Ananda, this seeing of darkness is not really seeing. Ananda is saying that someone without the use of his eyes cannot see. "Why do you say the blind man sees?" he asks the Buddha.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "Is there any difference between the blackness seen by blind people, who do not have the use of their eyes, and the blackness seen by someone who has the use of his eyes when he is in a dark room?"

Commentary:

Is the darkness that sighted people see when they are in a dark house that is without the light of sun, moon, or lamps any different from the darkness seen by blind people? If a blind person and a person who has sight are together in a dark room, are the two blacks they see distinguishable?

Sutra:

"So it is, World Honored One. Between the two kinds of blackness, that seen by the person in a dark room and that seen by the blind, there is no difference."

Commentary:

Ananda answers the World Honored One's question. "**So it is.** Yes, Buddha**. Between the two kinds of blackness, that seen by the person in a dark room and that seen by the blind, there is no difference.** The two kinds of blackness are the same."

"Fine," said the Buddha. "Yes."

O5 He states that the eye's seeing is the mind.
P1 He points out the fault in the eye's seeing.

Sutra:

"Ananda, if the person without the use of his eyes who sees only blackness were suddenly to regain his sight and see all kinds of forms, and you say it is his eyes which see, then when the person in a dark room who sees only blackness suddenly sees all kinds of forms because a lamp is lit, you should say it is the lamp which sees.

Commentary:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "**Ananda, if the person without the use of his eyes who sees only blackness were suddenly to regain his sight and see all kinds of forms**…you say that there is no difference between the two kinds of blackness. But what if the blind person in our example were suddenly to regain his sight so that his eyes could see everything in every direction? **You say it is his eyes which see**. This is your argument. But what about the case **when the person in a dark room who sees only blackness suddenly sees all kinds of forms because a lamp is lit?** The sighted person in a dark room also sees blackness, but once a lamp is lit, he too can see everything. Given your argument, you should say it is the lamp which sees."

Why does the Buddha say that? People in a dark room cannot see, but when a lamp is lit, they can see. People who don't have the use of their eyes cannot see, but if they regain their sight then they can see again. If when that person who cannot see suddenly sees because he regains his sight, then when the person in the dark room

sees because of the lamp, that should be called the lamp's seeing. "Is that right?" the Buddha asks.

Sutra:

"If it is a case of the lamp seeing, it would be a lamp endowed with sight – which couldn't be called a lamp. And if the lamp were to do the seeing, how would you be involved?

Commentary:

If it really were the case that the lamp could see and do the looking, then it wouldn't have anything to do with you.

P2 He concludes that in actual fact it is the mind that sees.

Sutra:

"Therefore you should know that while the lamp can reveal the forms, it is the eyes, not the lamp, that do the seeing. And while the eyes can reveal the forms, the seeing-nature comes from the mind, not the eyes."

Commentary:

"**Therefore you should know that while the lamp can reveal the forms, it is the eyes, not the lamp, that do the seeing.** The lamp allows the shapes to appear, but it is the eyes that see the shapes By the same token, **while the eyes can reveal the forms, the seeing-nature comes from the mind, not the eyes**. We are now looking into the first or the ten manifestations of seeing. The first of the ten shows the seeing of the mind, not of the eyes.

Seeing Does Not Move

N2 He shows that the seeing does not move.
O1 Discussion of the assembly's hope for instruction.

Sutra:

Although Ananda and everyone in the great assembly had heard what was said, their minds had not yet understood, and so they remained silent. Hoping to hear more of the gentle sounds of the Tathagata's teaching, they put their palms together, purified their minds, and stood waiting for the Tathagata's compassionate instruction.

Commentary:

Although Ananda and everyone in the great assembly had heard what was said, their minds had not yet understood, and so they remained silent. Ananda and everyone else there closed their mouths and didn't say anything. Why weren't they talking? They were thinking, "Oh? My eyes can't see things? Oh? My mind sees? You may say that isn't true, but the Buddha has explained it this way. If you say it is true, why haven't I ever understood it to be this way before?" That's what they were thinking, because they hadn't yet understood. Their minds had not yet opened and become enlightened. **Hoping to hear more of the gentle sounds of the Tathagata's teaching –** they were thinking, "I hope the Buddha will have a compassionate heart and talk to me." **They put their**

palms together. Why did they put their palms together? It represents their single-mindedness. They were of one mind, not two. When your hands are apart, it is said you have ten minds, and when your palms are together, it is said you have one mind, because when your palms go together, your mind comes together and becomes one. **Purified their minds.** Clear out your mind. Clear your heart. Don't put too much garbage in your head. Take the garbage that is in there and get rid of it. **And stood waiting for the Tathagata's compassionate instruction.** They stood waiting for the Buddha's compassionate words to help them understand better, so they could become enlightened and not be so confused,

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O2 He determines the guest and dust.

P1 The Thus Come One asks about the ultimate source of enlightenment.

Sutra:

Then the World Honored One extended his tula-cotton webbed bright hand, opened his five-wheeled fingers, and told Ananda and the great assembly, "When I first accomplished the Way I went to the Deer Park, and for the sake of Ajnatakaundinya and all five of the bhikshus, as well as for you of the fourfold assembly, I said, 'It is because living beings are impeded by guest-dust and affliction that they do not realize Bodhi or become arhats.' At that time, what caused you who have now realized the holy fruit to become enlightened?"

Commentary:

Then, while those in the assembly stood waiting to receive the Buddha's compassionate teaching and transforming, the World Honored One, Shakyamuni Buddha, **extended his tula-cotton webbed bright hand, opened his five-wheeled fingers**… On the Buddha's hand is the hallmark of the thousand-spoked wheel. His hand is extremely soft, like the finest cotton, and it is webbed and luminous. He **told Ananda and the great assembly, "When I first accomplished the Way**…" One evening, on the eighth day of the twelfth month, while sitting under the Bodhi tree, he saw a star and awakened to perfect the Way. **I went to the Deer Park.** This is a

vast park devoted exclusively to raising deer. How did that come about? It all began limitless kalpas ago when Shakyamuni Buddha was a deer, the leader of a herd of 500. And guess who else was there? Devadatta, who was also a deer-king with a following of 500 deer. In the later life when the Buddha realized Buddhahood, Devadatta became the Buddha's jealous cousin and tried to kill him. But in that earlier life when both were deer-kings, there was a king among the people who used a lot of manpower and machinery to corral vast numbers of wild animals into a certain area. He planned to hunt them all down and kill them on the grounds that there were too many wild animals. So then Shakyamuni Buddha, in the form he had taken of a deer-king had a meeting with the deer-king Devadatta. They said to each other, "We should save the lives of our retinue. We shouldn't let the king kill us all. How can we save ourselves? Let's go talk it over with the king and petition him not to kill us off." Although they were deer, they could speak the language of people. So the two deer went to see the king, and when they encountered the armed guard at the gates they said in a commanding tone, "We would like an appointment with the king. Can you deliver our message?" When the guard heard that the deer could speak the human language, he went to repeat their message to the king.

The king also found it strange to hear that deer could talk, and he agreed to an audience with them so they could state their petition. The two deer-kings went before the king and said, "We are deer. Every day you kill seven or eight of us – more than you can possibly eat in a single day. What cannot be eaten is left to spoil. Wouldn't it be better if we did it this way: every day we will take turns supplying you with one deer, and in that way you can have fresh venison every day without killing us all off at once. If you use this method, your supply of venison will never run out. Several hundred years from now there will still be venison to eat."

Because he saw the sense in their petition, and because the deer could speak, the king was moved to grant their request. So each of the deer-kings, on alternate days, sent the king a deer. Now one day

it happened that it was the turn of a pregnant doe in Devadatta's herd to go sacrifice herself to the king. Her fawn was heavy in her belly and would probably be born in a day or so. So she pleaded with the deer-king Devadatta, "Can you send someone in my place today, and then after the fawn is born I will go to the king and sacrifice myself?"

Devadatta replied, "Impossible. It is your turn, and you must go. There is no politeness in this matter. You don't want to die. Who does? Not one of the deer want to go to their death. You want to live a few more days now that it has come around to your turn, but that is impossible."

The pregnant doe's eyes brimmed with tears and she went to talk to the deer-king who was to become Shakyamuni Buddha. Although she didn't belong to his herd, she went to plead with him and ask if he could work out a temporary exchange so she could live a few more days until her fawn was born. As he considered her request, Shakyamuni Buddha realized that not one of his 500 deer would want to go in her place. However, the Buddha said to her, "Fine. You stay in my herd; you don't need to go." Then the deer-king Shakyamuni Buddha went himself to be sacrificed in her place.

The king asked him, "What are you doing here? Have all your deer been eaten? Is your herd all gone? Why have you come?" And since he could talk, the deer-king Shakyamuni Buddha said, "King, you haven't eaten all our deer; on the contrary, we are prospering. Day by day our herds are increasing. You only eat one deer a day, and in one day our does give birth to many fawns."

The king said, "Then why have you come yourself?"

Shakyamuni Buddha explained, "There is a pregnant doe whose fawn will be born in a day or so. It was her turn to come today, but since she wanted to wait until she had given birth to her fawn before she came to let the king eat her, she came to me and pleaded to have someone sent in her place. I thought over her request and realized

that none of the deer in the herd would want to die before they had to, so I came myself to substitute for her."

When the king heard that, he was profoundly moved, and he said, "From now on, don't send any more deer to the palace." Then he spoke a verse:

You are a deer with a human head.
I am a person with a deer's head.
From this day forward, I will not
Eat the flesh of living beings.

He said, "Although you have the head of a deer, you are a human being and although I have the head of a human being, I am a deer." And then he vowed never to eat the flesh of living beings again. Because of that, the deer population in the park increased significantly; and the park was called the Deer-Wilds Park. It was also named The Park of the Immortals because the "wind and water," the geomantic lay of the land and its location, were particularly fine, and many immortals came there to cultivate the Way. So when Shakyamuni Buddha became a Buddha, he went first to the Deer-Wilds Park to convert the five bhikshus.

And for the sake of Ajnatakaundinya and all five of the bhikshus… Three of the five bhikshus were relatives of the Buddha's father and two were relatives of the Buddha's mother. When the Buddha first left the palace to leave the home-life and cultivate the Way in the Himalayas, his parents had sent these relatives along after him to try to convince him to return. At that time the five bhikshus were not bhikshus, but high officials, and although they exhorted the Buddha to return, he would not. The five of them couldn't go back and face the king, the Buddha's father, without having accomplished their mission, so they stayed with the Buddha instead and accompanied him in cultivating the Way.

Of the three who were his father's relatives, one was called Ashvajit – the name means "Horse Victory"; one was called

Bhadrika – the name means "Little Worthy"; and the other was called Mahanama Kulika. The two on the mother's side were Ajnatakaundinya and Dashabala Kashyapa, "Drinker of Light," so named because he was a fire worshipper. The five stayed with the Buddha and cultivated ascetic practices, but eventually it became so bitter that three of them couldn't take it and left. They backed out. The other two continued to cultivate with the Buddha. At that time the Buddha was eating only one grain of rice and one sesame seed a day, and he became so emaciated that he was nothing but skin and bones. Then one day a goddess brought him some milk gruel as an offering. He drank the gruel, and his body began to fill out again. The two who were cultivating with him got upset when they saw this, and they said, "How can someone who cultivates the Way drink milk gruel?" And so they left too. There was Shakyamuni Buddha in the midst of bitter cultivation and the five people his father and mother had sent to be with him all left him, three because they couldn't take the suffering, and two because they saw the Buddha enjoying his blessings. The Buddha remained alone to cultivate. After he had cultivated there for six years, he went to sit under the Bodhi tree, and on the eighth day of the twelfth month he saw a star appear and became enlightened. "At night he saw a bright star and awakened to the Way." After his enlightenment, he looked into the matter of who he should convert first, and saw that it was Ajnatakaundinya, one of the five bhikshus, who in a past life had been the King of Kalinga and had cut the Buddha's body limb from limb. In that life the Buddha had vowed that when he became a Buddha the first one he would save would be the King of Kalinga. That is why when Shakyamuni Buddha became enlightened he went first to the Deer Park and converted the five bhikshus.

Shakyamuni Buddha said, "For the sake of the five bhikshus **as well as for you of the four-fold assembly –** the four-fold assembly consists of the bhikshus (monks), bhikshunis (nuns), upasakas (laymen), and upasikas (laywomen). **I said, 'It is because living beings are impeded by guest-dust and affliction that they do not**

realize Bodhi or become arhats.'" Why don't living beings accomplish Buddhahood or become enlightened? Why don't they accomplish the first fruit of Arhatship?

The phrase "guest-dust" also refers to your false thoughts. False thoughts are "guest-dust" and affliction. You can also say that "guest-dust" refers to the two kinds of delusion: view-delusion and thought-delusion. "Afflictions" can also be said to be delusions of ignorance and delusions as numerous as motes of dust and sand.

Why are people impeded by "guest-dust" and affliction? Because people are really strange. They like to eat afflictions all day long. Fix them good food, give them some good bread and butter, and they won't eat it. All they want to eat is afflictions, which they find more delicious than vegetable dumplings. Even if someone tells them not to eat affliction, they find it impossible to refrain from it. From morning to night, they eat nothing but "guest-dust" and afflictions and fill their bellies full of anger instead of food. People like that are truly pathetic. Shakyamuni Buddha said, "The reason all you living beings do not become Buddhas or Arhats is because you are impeded by "guest-dust" and affliction.

"At that time, what caused you who have now realized the holy fruit to become enlightened?" "That time" refers to the time when Shakyamuni Buddha went to the Deer Park and spoke Dharma. "You" the Buddha means the five bhikshus and the four-fold assembly of bhikshus, bhikshunis, upasakas, and upasikas. The Buddha asks them how and why they became enlightened when he talked about "guest-dust" and affliction. What meaning did they see that caused them to obtain the fruition of Arhatship?

P2 Purna answers that the Buddha sealed and certified him.

Sutra:

Then Ajnatakaundinya arose and said to the Buddha, "Of the elders now present in the great assembly, only I received the name 'understanding' because I was enlightened to the meaning of the word 'guest-dust' and realized the fruition.

Commentary:

Ajnatakaundinya was one of the five bhikshus. His name is interpreted to mean “understanding the fundamental limit” and also “the very first to understand” because he was the first to understand and to be certified as having attained Arhatship. **Then Ajnatakaundinya arose and said to the Buddha.** Ajnatakaundinya stood up and spoke to the Buddha. **“Of the elders now present in the great assembly, only I received the name ‘understanding’ because I was enlightened to the meaning of the word ‘guest-dust’ and realized the fruition.** He said, “Now in this great assembly, I am an elder, I am older and much more experienced. Why did I receive the name ‘understanding’? Upon hearing the Buddha speak the word “guest-dust” I understood the meaning and attained enlightenment.” Ajnatakaundinya will explain the meaning of “guest-dust” in the following passages.

Sutra:

“World Honored One, it is like a traveler who stops as a guest at a roadside inn, perhaps for the night or perhaps for a meal. When he has finished lodging there or when the meal is finished, he packs his baggage and sets out again. He does not remain there at leisure. The host himself, however, does not go far away.

Commentary:

World Honored One, Ajnatakaundinya said, “Buddha, why was it that the two words ‘guest-dust’ brought about my enlightenment? **It is like a traveler who stops as a guest at a roadside inn, perhaps for the night or perhaps for a meal.** A guest who is on a journey, on a holiday, looks for an inn where he can stay for a while. Perhaps he stays overnight there, or perhaps he goes there to eat. **When he has finished lodging there or when the meal is finished, he packs his baggage and sets out again.** When he has finished eating and sleeping, he readies his suitcases and goes on. **He does not remain there at leisure.** He’s a guest; he can’t live there all the time. **The host himself, however, does not go far**

away. The "host" refers to the pure nature and bright substance of the permanently dwelling true mind. The "guest" refers to false thinking, the wearisome dust.

Why is it compared to "guest dust"? Because it is not something fundamental to us. Our bodies are basically clean, but if we go out on a windy day the dust may blow up and cover us, soiling our bodies. When we take our hands and brush away the dust, it disappears. What does this represent? It represents our afflictions and ignorance which are like "guest-dust"; they do not really exist. The guest is affliction and ignorance, the obstruction of affliction, the obstruction of what is known, the delusion of views and the delusion of thought. So Ajnatakaundinya understood that the guest at an inn stays only temporarily, whereas the host of the inn always lives there.

Sutra:

"Considering it this way, the one who does not remain is called the guest, and the one who does remain is called the host. The word 'guest,' then, means 'one who does not remain.'

Commentary:

Ajnatakaundinya concludes**: "Considering it this way, the one who does not remain is called the guest, and the one who does remain is called the host.** We can also say that we reside in our bodies temporarily as a guest does in an inn. We should understand that our bodies are merely an inn, not an actual home. They are not our own home, and so we shouldn't be too attached to them. But our host, the permanently dwelling true mind, never goes away, never ceases to exist. **"The word 'guest,' then, means 'one who does not remain.'"**

Sutra:

"Again, when the sky clears up, the morning sun rises with all resplendence, and its golden rays stream into a house through a crevice to reveal particles of dust in the air. The dust dances in the rays of light, but the empty space is motionless.

Commentary:

“Again, when the sky clears up, the morning sun rises with all resplendence, and its golden rays stream into a house through a crevice to reveal particles of dust in the air.” When the sun has just come up, early on a clear fresh morning, a morning after a rain, the sun shines through a crack in the door or perhaps a crack in the wall, and it displays the fine bits of dust bobbing up and down in empty space, moving all around in the sunshine.” **“The dust dances in the rays of light, but the empty space is motionless.”** If the sun doesn’t shine in the crack, you can’t see the dust, although there is actually a lot of dust everywhere. But while the dust moves and bobs up and down, empty space is still. It doesn’t move. The ability to see the dust in the light that pours through the crack represents the attainment of the light of wisdom when you certify to the fruit and reach the first stage of Arhatship and overcome the 88 categories of view-delusion, you have the light of wisdom. Then you can see your ignorance, which causes afflictions as numerous as motes of dust or grains of sand in the Ganges River. The sun of wisdom shines on the dust-particles of affliction, as in Ajnatakaundinya’s analogy of the sun shining through the crack. The dark caverns of ignorance are illumined, and you see the dust of affliction, and you understand.

Sutra:

“Considering it this way, what is clear and still is called space, and what moves is called dust. The word ‘dust,’ then, means ‘that which moves.’”

Commentary:

Ignorance and afflictions as numerous as motes of dust move, but empty space does not move. Empty space represents our seeing-nature, which is also unmoving. It is the genuine host, our permanently dwelling true mind which does not come and does not go.

Commentary:

"Considering it this way, what is clear and still is called space. Clear and still, it does not move, and that is called space. **And what moves is called dust. The word 'dust,' then, means 'that which moves.'"** You see the bits of dust in the patch of sunshine dancing and flying about ceaselessly. What is this dust? It represents affliction, ignorance, the obstacle of affliction, and the obstacle of what is known. Attachment to those things is called "dust."

Every day you listen to the Sutra and I tell you not to have afflictions, and all you've got is afflictions. I tell you not to have ignorance and all you do is display your ignorance. Would you call this being obedient? The more it is said that ignorance is not a good thing, the greater the ignorance becomes. When it is said that afflictions aren't good, the afflictions grow. Before it was discussed, there were no afflictions, but once it was brought up, the afflictions came forth. So it must be that my explanation of the Sutra isn't a good explanation, because I haven't been able to explain away your afflictions. I hope you will all toss your afflictions in the Pacific Ocean. Don't look upon your afflictions as precious treasures. Don't treat afflictions as if they were your own kin. Don't let affliction be your playmate with birth and death. Don't be so affectionate towards them. You should toss your afflictions in the ocean, even though there are so many of them that they might well fill up the entire ocean.

Afflictions are demons. Where do you find demons and demonic ghosts? To have demonic ghosts is simply to have afflictions. You and the demons have gotten together. Afflictions are absolutely terrible, and the Sutra is being explained just to teach people to get rid of their afflictions, so don't let it be that the more we speak of afflictions the more they multiply.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "So it is."

Commentary:

After Ajnatakaundinya finished speaking, the Buddha gave him positive certification. He said, “What you have said is correct.” **The Buddha said, “So it is.”** What moves is dust, what does not move is space. Your theory is not mistaken.

O3 He actually shows the non-movement.
P1 He shows the non-movement in relation to external states.

Sutra:

Then in the midst of the great assembly the Thus Come One bent his five-wheeled fingers. After bending them, he opened them again. After he opened them, he bent them again, and he asked Ananda, “What do you see now?”

Ananda said, “I see the Thus Come One’s hundred-jeweled wheeled palms opening and closing in the midst of the assembly.”

Commentary:

The Buddha was concerned that most people in the great assembly still had not understood the genuine seeing-nature. **Then in the midst of the great assembly the Thus Come One bent his five-wheeled fingers. After bending them, he opened them again. After he opened them, he bent them again.** At that time the World Honored One bent his fingers, then stretched them out again, and clenched and unclenched his fist several times, and he asked Ananda, “What do you see now?” What do you see right now?”

Ananda said, “I see the Thus Come One’s hundred-jeweled wheeled palms. On the Buddha’s hand is the hallmark of a thousand-spoked wheel. Ananda refers to it as the hundred-jeweled wheeled palm, **opening and closing in the midst of the assembly.**

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "You see my hand open and close in the assembly. Is it my hand that opens and closes, or is it your seeing that opens and closes?"

Ananda said, "The World Honored One's jeweled hand opened and closed in the assembly. I saw the Thus Come One's hand itself open and close; it was not my seeing-nature that opened and closed."

Commentary:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "You see my hand open and close in the assembly. Is it my hand that opens and closes, or is it your seeing that opens and closes?" When you see my fist opening and closing, is it my fist that opens and closes, or is it your seeing of my fist that does the opening and closing?"

Ananda said, "The World Honored One's jeweled hand opened and closed in the assembly. I saw the Thus Come One's hand itself open and close." He said, "World Honored One, it is your hundred-jeweled wheeled palm that opens and closes. **It was not my seeing-nature that opened and closed.** My seeing-nature, which does the seeing, does not open and close. It is you that made the movement which caused me to see your hand open and close."

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "What moves and what is still?"

Commentary:

The Buddha was still concerned that Ananda had not genuinely understood. So he asked a further question. **The Buddha said, "What moves and what is still?"**

Sutra:

Ananda said, "The Buddha's hand does not remain at rest. And since my seeing-nature is beyond even stillness, how could it not be at rest?"

Commentary:

Ananda said, "The Buddha's hand does not remain at rest. In order words, it moved. **And since my seeing-nature is beyond even stillness, how could it not be at rest?"**

Why does he say it doesn't even have the characteristic of stillness? Because stillness comes from movement. If there isn't any movement, then basically there isn't any stillness. So it is said that there is no coming out of the Great Shurangama Samadhi and no entering it. That's the principle here. "Nagas are always in samadhi. There is never a time when they are not in samadhi." With the Shurangama Samadhi, nagas – that is, dragons – are always in samadhi. Since they are never not in samadhi, they never enter it and never leave it.

Thus Ananda said, "My seeing-nature, by which I see you, is devoid even of stillness. It is beyond the characteristic of movement or its opposite, stillness." Without movement, there is no stillness; both characteristics are gone. They are fundamentally unobtainable, non-existent, and they cannot be found. Then how could it not be at rest? Ananda says. Since the seeing-nature doesn't even have the characteristic of stillness, how could it possibly have movement. It does not move.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "So it is."

Commentary:

Once again the Buddha agrees. **The Buddha said, "So it is."** What you say is right. That's the way it is."

P2 He shows non-movement in relation to the internal body.

Sutra:

Then from his wheeled palm the Thus Come One sent a precious ray of light flying to Ananda's right. Ananda immediately turned his head and glanced to the right. He then sent another ray of light to Ananda's left. Ananda again turned

his head and glanced to the left. The Buddha said to Ananda, "Why did your head move just now?"

Ananda said, "I saw the Thus Come One emit a wonderful precious light which came by my left and right, and so I looked to the left and right. My head moved of itself."

Commentary:

Then from his wheeled palm the Thus Come One sent a precious ray of light flying to Ananda's right. From the Buddha's hundred-jeweled wheeled palm, the ray of light flew swift as a bird or like a searchlight which shoots light out into space so that things can be seen for great distances. That's more or less what it was like. It could also be likened to a flashlight, in that as soon as you turn it on, the light shoots out. The precious light which the Buddha can emit from his hand is clearer than the light of a flashlight, however. As soon as the precious light went flying by Ananda on his right side, **Ananda immediately turned his head and glanced to the right.** He turned his head to watch where the light flew, and how far. **He then sent another ray of light to Ananda's left.** From the Buddha's wheeled palm came forth another ray of light. Where did it go? It went to Ananda's left. **Ananda again turned his head and glanced to the left.** He took a look to his left.

The Buddha said to Ananda, "Why did your head move just now?" The Buddha questioned Ananda further. "Why did your head move as you glanced left and right?"

Ananda said, "I saw the Thus Come One emit a wonderful precious light which came by my left and right, and so I looked to the left and right. My head moved of itself. It came by my right side and then by my left side. My head moved because I was watching the light."

Sutra:

"Ananda, when you glanced at the Buddha's light and moved your head to the left and right, was it your head that moved or your seeing that moved?"

“World Honored One, my head moved of itself. Since my seeing-nature is beyond even cessation, how could it move?”

Commentary:

The Buddha asked Ananda again, “**Ananda, when you glanced at the Buddha’s light and moved your head to the left and right, was it your head that moved or your seeing that moved?** Which moved back and forth, your head or your seeing-nature?”

“World Honored One, my head moved of itself.” Ananda answered that his head moved by itself. **Since my seeing-nature**, which is capable of seeing, **is beyond even cessation**, how could it move? It doesn’t even have the characteristic of ceasing. The meaning is the same as in the previous passage. If the seeing-nature has no characteristic of cessation – which is to say, if it has no characteristic of stillness – then it can’t have the characteristic of movement, either. This is how Ananda answered the Buddha. The seeing-nature is in a state of unmoving suchness.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, “So it is.”

Commentary:

The Buddha said, “What you’ve just said is right.” **The Buddha said, “So it is.”** You perceived the principle correctly. Earlier, you mistook a thief for your son when you insisted on taking false thinking to be your true mind. But now you understand that your seeing-nature does not move. Now there is a little hope for you.” Thus the Buddha replies in a pleased way with a word of praise.

O4 He scolds them all for their mistaken recognition.
P1 He returns to the former guest-dust which was enlightened to.

Sutra:

Then the Thus Come One told everyone in the great assembly, “Suppose other living beings called what moves ‘the dust’ and what does not dwell ‘the guest’?

Commentary:

At that point the Buddha told the great assembly, "Now that you've heard me explain this doctrine, it's certain that you all understand it very clearly. There is no need for me to say more. But **suppose other living beings called what moves 'the dust' and what does not dwell 'the guest'?** Perhaps there are other living beings who call "dust" the things which move and name "guest" what does not reside at a place. Why is it that way?

P2 He enables them to see the emptiness of the invisible host.

Sutra:

"You noticed that it was Ananda's head that moved; the seeing did not move. You also noticed that it was my hand which opened and closed; the seeing did not stretch or bend.

Commentary:

You noticed that it was Ananda's head that moved; the seeing did not move. You in the great assembly watched Ananda's head turn back and forth, and Ananda just said the seeing-nature is unmoving**. You also noticed that it was my hand which opened and closed; the seeing did not stretch or bend.** It wasn't the seeing nature that stretched out or flexed.

P3 He upbraids them from grasping at the flowing and turning.

Sutra:

"Why do you continue to take something moving like your body and its environment to be in substantial existence, so that from the beginning to the end, your every thought is subject to production and extinction?

Commentary:

Here the Buddha scolds the great assembly. He says, "Now you have seen very clearly that the seeing-nature does not move. Then **why do you continue to take something moving like your body and its environment to be in substantial existence?** You in the great assembly are unable to see your own genuine seeing-nature.

You take your physical body and the environment in which it finds itself to be a real thing. You react to the moving of your body and surroundings as if they were actual. These movements are basically external. They are not something that belongs to your self-nature. **So that from the beginning to the end, your every thought is subject to production and extinction?** You cling tenaciously to your body and mind as your hosts. You use the conscious mind in your thinking, and every thought of your conscious mind is subject to production and extinction. First one thought arises and is extinguished and then the next thought arises and is extinguished. Production and extinction follows production and extinction. You concentrate your effort exclusively on the realm of production and extinction, and have no true understanding of the seeing-nature."

Sutra:

"You have lost your true nature and conduct yourselves in upside-down ways. Having lost your true nature and mind, you recognize objects as yourself, and it is you who cling to the flowing and turning of the revolving wheel."

Commentary:

Now the Buddha scolds everyone and tells the great assembly it is wrong. "**You have lost your true nature.** From beginningless time to the present, you have all lost your true nature. It is not truly lost, but it seems to be lost. Why? Because living beings don't perceive the unmoving, unshakable realm of the self-nature, and so they have not understood this doctrine. It is as if it is lost. **And conduct yourselves in upside-down ways.** Basically, when you do things, you should do them well, but you continually botch them up. That's called doing things in an upside-down way." What is meant by upside-down? I'll give you an example. A man is upside-down when his feet are on top and his head is on the bottom. Or else your feet are on the bottom and your head is on top, but you take your shoes and put them on your head, and you wear your hat on your feet. That's also called upside-down. When you were little and your parents sent you off to school and you didn't want to go, that

too was a case of being upside-down. When people are trying to sleep and you make a lot of noise, yelling and carrying on so they can't sleep, you're acting upside-down. In general, things which are not done in accord with propriety are called upside-down. It's to turn your back on the Way and run off. You want to go south, to South San Francisco, but you end up going north to North San Francisco. That's to be upside-down and going backwards.

"**Having lost your true nature and mind, you recognize objects as yourself.** Because you conduct yourself in upside-down ways, your nature and mind do not work together, and thus you lose track of the true and actual nature. You mistake outside states as yourself. That means you recognize that inn of yours as yourself. You shouldn't think that your inn is you. That's to recognize objects as yourself." "Objects" here refers to all external objects. **"And it is you who cling to the flowing and turning of the revolving wheel."** Because you recognize things as yourself you produce all kinds of attachments. You fail to see through all kinds of things. You aren't clear about principle. And because of that, you cling to flowing and turning – that is, to birth and death. You yourself are attached to dying. You go looking for birth and death. If you yourself weren't upside-down, if you didn't mistake a thief for your son and objects for yourself, you would be able to end birth and death.

If you want to end birth and death, it is an easy thing to do. All you need to do is turn yourself around. If you go forward, you head right down the path of birth and death. If you turn around and go the other way, you end birth and death. It's not that difficult; it's just that it's up to you to do it. You simply turn around; you turn your head and pivot your body. That's all that's needed. It is said, "The sea of suffering is boundless; a turn of the head is the other shore."

Seeing Does Not Become Extinct

N3 He shows that the seeing does not become extinct.
O1 The assembly considers this and asks for further instruction.

Sutra:

When Ananda and the great assembly heard the Buddha's instructions, they became peaceful and composed both in body and mind. They recollected that since time without beginning, they had strayed from their fundamental true mind by mistaking the shadows of their causally conditioned differentiating minds as something real and substantial. Now on this day they had awakened to such illusions and misconceptions. Like a lost infant who rejoins its beloved mother after a long separation, they put their palms together to make obeisance to the Buddha.

Commentary:

When Ananda and the great assembly heard the Buddha's instructions. When Ananda and the great Bodhisattvas, the great Arhats, and the great bhikshus, and the others heard this teaching, **they became peaceful and composed both in body and mind.** Their bodies and minds felt extremely comfortable, so that they didn't feel the least bit of pain. They had never felt better. They had never known anything so fine. But at the same time, **they recollected that since time without beginning, they had strayed**

from their fundamental true mind by mistaking the shadows of their causally conditioned differentiating minds as something real and substantial. From time without beginning they had renounced their basic mind and had used only their false mind, their conscious mind, their mind which makes distinctions in order to do things. They hadn't understood external states; they'd taken their false-thinking mind to be true and actual. They had engaged in false activities at the gates of the six organs and hadn't the least bit of skill when it came to the self-nature. In order to function, they dealt exclusively with the false-thinking mind, the attached mind, the arrogant mind, the mind which seizes upon conditions, the mind which is false in various kinds of ways. **Now on this day they had awakened to such illusions and misconceptions. Like a lost infant who rejoins its beloved mother after a long separation, they put their palms together to make obeisance to the Buddha.** They had been like a hungry child who had no milk to drink; it had been very painful. All of a sudden the child's compassionate mother had returned, and the child had milk to drink: that is what it was like for the assembly when they awakened upon hearing the Buddha's instruction. They placed their palms together and bowed to the Buddha to thank him for his kindness in bestowing the Dharma upon them.

Sutra:

They wished to hear such words from the Thus Come One as to enlighten them to the dual nature of body and mind – what is false and what is real, what is empty and what is substantial, what is subject to production and extinction and what transcends production and extinction.

Commentary:

Why did the assembly bow to the Buddha? Because **they wished to hear such words from the Thus Come One as to enlighten them to the dual nature of body and mind.** They wanted him to uncover it and portray it clearly, to reveal **what is false and what is real, what is empty and what is substantial.**

There is the true and the false, the empty and the actual, and they wanted the Buddha to teach them to recognize each of them. They wanted him to reveal **what is subject to production and extinction and what transcends production and extinction –** to reveal the mind's dual nature, the mind with superficial production and extinction and the mind that is not subject to production and extinction.

What is the mind of production and extinction? It is the conscious mind, our mind which seizes upon conditions by turning to the outside and seeking there, instead of developing skill at the self-nature. What is the mind not subject to production and extinction? You must apply your skill to the self-nature and understand that the mountains, the rivers, the great earth, the vegetation, and all the myriad appearances are all the Dharmabody of all Buddhas. The Dharmabody of all Buddhas is neither produced nor extinguished. And the pure nature and bright substance of everyone's permanently dwelling true mind is also not produced and not extinguished.

Why do we have production and extinction, birth and death?

It is because we do not recognize the pure nature and bright substance of the permanently dwelling true mind. It is also because your mad mind has not ceased. So it is said, "when the mad mind ceases, that ceasing is Bodhi." The mad mind's stopping itself is the manifestation of your Bodhi-mind. Because the mad mind exists and has not ceased, the Bodhi-mind cannot come forth. The mad mind covers it over. What is being explained now, and in every other passage of sutra text without exception, has the aim of revealing everyone's true mind.

O2 King Prasenajit tells his situation and makes a special request.

Sutra:

Then King Prasenajit rose and said to the Buddha, "In the past, when I had not yet received the teachings of the Buddha, I met Katyayana and Vairatiputra, both of whom said that this

body is annihilated after death, and that this is Nirvana. Now, although I have met the Buddha, I still have doubts about their words. How much I wish to be enlightened to the ways and means to perceive and realize the true mind, thereby proving that it transcends production and extinction! All those who have outflows also wish to be instructed on this subject."

Commentary:

Then – before the Buddha spoke **– King Prasenajit rose** in the great assembly. King Prasenajit's name means "Moonlight" in Sanskrit, as mentioned before. The king was born at the same time that the Buddha entered the world. Upon entering the world the Buddha emitted light, but King Prasenajit's father thought that it was his son who was emitting the light as he came into the world, so he named him "Moonlight."

King Prasenajit **said to the Buddha, "In the past, when I had not yet received the teachings of the Buddha, I met Katyayana and Vairatiputra.** Before I received the benefit of the Buddha's teaching and transforming, I believed in external paths." He believed in the annihilationism of Katyayana. "Katyayana" is a Sanskrit name which is interpreted to mean "cut hair," because formerly those who followed this external path did not cut their hair or their fingernails, and so were called the "long-nailed external path." "Vairatiputra" means "son of Vairati"; Vairati was his mother's name; the name is interpreted to mean "does not do." What he didn't do were good deeds, but he had no hesitation about doing bad deeds.

"Both of whom said that this body is annihilated after death, and that this is Nirvana. They say that after this body dies there isn't anything. There is no cause and there is no effect, no future lives and no former lives." Basically a person's death is like putting out a lamp. It's gone. There isn't anything at all. Everything is annihilated. Annihilation means there is no soul, no awareness, no nature, nothing at all, and that's what they call Nirvana. That's what annihilationists mean by not produced and not extinguished; since

there's nothing, there isn't any production or extinction. That's how the external paths talk. But I will tell you all that that is a grave mistake. When people die they are not annihilated.

So, it is just at this point where the distinction between Buddhism and external paths lies. Some external paths talk about annihilation, and some talk about permanence. One advocates annihilation, the other advocates externalism, and both kinds confuse people most seriously.

"Now, although I have met the Buddha, I still have doubts about their words. The Buddha has come into the world and has come to teach and transform me, but I still have 'fox-like' doubts and do not believe the doctrine spoken by the Buddha. He still feels that people are annihilated when they die and that their ceasing to exist is Nirvana.

Doubts are said to be "fox-like" because the fox-spirit is doubtful by nature. No matter what you say, he doesn't believe it. For example, when a fox walks across the ice in winter, he takes one step, stops, cocks his ear, and listens, then takes another step and cocks his ear to listen. If he hears the ice cracking, he immediately retreats. He knows that if the ice cracks it is not thick enough and could send him plunging into the river. He is extremely intelligent. So it is said of an intelligent person, "He's as smart as a fox-spirit." He has a lot of doubt in his mind and is apt to argue. He opposes everyone, no matter who, and is always on the defensive, like a fox.

"How much I wish to be enlightened to the ways and means to perceive and realize the true mind, thereby proving that it transcends production and extinction! All those who have outflows also wish to be instructed on this subject. How can I come to know the genuine doctrine of no production and no extinction and realize my mind which is not produced and not extinguished? Everyone in the assembly who has not obtained the spiritual penetration of the extinction of outflows wishes to understand this doctrine."

To have outflows is to flow into the three realms – into the desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm. When people flow there, they undergo birth and death. Those who have not ended birth and death are called people with outflows. So everyone in the assembly who had not certified to the fruit and still had outflows wanted to understand the doctrine of no production and no extinction so that they could all perceive their true minds, be enlightened, and end their outflows.

O3 The Thus Come One thoroughly shows that seeing is not extinguished.
P1 He shows that the body changes.
Q1 Discussion of the overall changes and eventual extinction.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to the great king, "Now I ask you, as it is now is your physical body like vajra, indestructible and living forever? Or does it change and go bad?"

"World Honored One, this body of mine will keep changing until it eventually becomes extinct."

Commentary:

In this section of text the Buddha asks the king whether the king's body will decay, and the king answers that it will decay completely. **The Buddha said to the great king, "Now I ask you, as it is now is your physical body like vajra, indestructible and living forever?** If we just consider your flesh-body, is it as durable as vajra? Is it eternally indestructible like a vajra jewel or a diamond? **Or does it change and go bad?** In the last analysis, what is it like? Is it possible to destroy it? Tell me."

"World Honored One, this body of mine will keep changing until it eventually becomes extinct." Upon hearing the Buddha's question, King Prasenajit replied without hesitation, "World Honored One, this body of mine will eventually go completely bad. Eventually it will be finished, that is for certain."

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "Great King, you have not yet become extinct. How do you know you will become extinct?"

Commentary:

In answer**, the Buddha said, "Great King, you have not yet become extinct.** You aren't dead yet; how do you know that in the future you will die? You haven't become extinct yet, so what enables you to know that you will keep changing until you become extinct? Tell me. How does it happen that you know so much doctrine?"

Sutra:

"World Honored One, although my impermanent, changing, and decaying body has not yet become extinct, I observe it now, and every passing thought fades away. Each new one fails to remain, but gradually perishes like fire turning to ashes. This perishing without cease convinces me that this body will eventually become completely extinct."

Commentary:

King Prasenajit replied, **"World Honored One, although my impermanent, changing, and decaying body has not yet become extinct, I observe it now –** Although it is not dead yet, this body of mine is not eternal, but at best will last only eighty or ninety years. At the very most it won't last more than a hundred years."

"Observe" means that he contemplated it in general and in detail, inside and outside, from front to back, and close up and from a distance. "I look at others and look at myself. Other people die and I am the same as they are."

"Every passing thought fades away." Now he regards his mind within, and sees that each thought perishes as the next thought arises. The one replaces the other and is replaced by the next in turn. They are just like waves. Although I cannot see them, they seem like waves which arise ceaselessly, one wave upon the next. They are continually changing and dying out. **"Each new one fails**

to remain, but gradually perishes." A thought does not remain forever. As a new thought comes up, the one preceding it ages, and none can last eternally. It is the same as when incense is lit. **"Like fire turning to ashes."** The ashes fall and the fire reappears, but then, after a short while, the ashes once again cover the fire. The ashes represent the old; the fire is the new. But the new is continually, unendingly turning to ashes. The ashes fall bit by bit and turn into dust and disappear. **"This perishing without cease convinces me that this body will eventually become completely extinct."** So I am absolutely certain without any question," says King Prasenajit, "that in the future my body will return to extinction.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "So it is.

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha tells the king that he has explained it correctly. Every passing thought fades away and will eventually become completely extinct.

Q2 A detailed examination of the change and extinction.
R1 He compares old age and youth.

Sutra:

"Great King, at your present age you are already old and declining. How do your appearance and complexion compare to when you were a youth?"

Commentary:

Although the Buddha agreed with King Prasenajit's explanation, he still had questions to ask**. Great King, at your present age you are already old and declining.** You're already old, and your face is now wrinkled, your beard white, your hair snowy. The marks of decay are appearing. **How do your appearance and complexion compare to when you were a youth?** "Complexion" refers to the color of his face, "appearance" refers to the features. "Is there any difference between your features

as they are now and as they were when you were young? Has there been any change?" the Buddha asks King Prasenajit.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, in the past when I was young my skin was moist and shining. When I reached the prime of life, my blood and breath were full. But now in my declining years, as I race into old age, my form is withered and wizened and my spirit dull. My hair is white and my face is in wrinkles and I haven't much time remaining. How can I be compared to how I was when I was full of life?"

Commentary:

The king answered, **"World Honored One, in the past when I was young my skin was moist and shining."** This refers to when he was a child. Sometimes children are spoiled, act up, and are not very obedient to their parents, and the parents indulge them. "Skin" here refers to the surface of the skin as well as to the subcutaneous region between the skin and the flesh. Children's cheeks are rosy, and that's how the king was – very vibrant. **"When I reached the prime of life, my blood and breath were full."** He felt that his body was very strong. **"But now in my declining years, as I race into old age,"** he has reached the point where his body no longer helps him out. The body is oppressive and nags at him to move somewhere else. It will soon be unlivable.

It is said that there are three restrictions on the superior person. "When one is young and the blood and breath are restless, the restriction is on sex." Young people should restrict sex, restrict sexual desire. If you do not, you will cause your body to lose its health and strength. "When one is in one's prime and the blood and breath are strong, the restriction is on fighting." You should not spend all your time picking quarrels. If someone hits you, move back a step. Don't fight with people. "When one is old and the blood and breath are on the decline, the restriction is on acquiring things." "Acquiring things" means being insatiably greedy. Old people should not be greedy about acquiring things.

The old age that King Prasenajit is racing towards refers to the age of seventy or more. Wasn't it Emperor Yao who said, "At seventy I turn to rest?" Because he was over seventy, he got lazy and didn't want to keep looking after the governmental affairs of the country. **"My form is withered and wizened",** King Prasenajit says, **"and my spirit dull."** He was dried up and sagging and he couldn't remember anything. It was not as it was in his youth, when he could remember everything very clearly. "Dull" means that he wasn't clear about things; he was a bit eccentric, a bit senile. But I don't believe the meaning is that he was insane. **My hair is white and my face is in wrinkles and I haven't much time remaining.** Very few Indians are fair-haired when they are young, but when they get old their hair turns white. When he was young he was dark-haired and handsome, but now his face has become a mass of wrinkles, more wrinkled than the skin of a chicken. So he was really ugly.

"And I haven't much time remaining." When he said those words he had endless regrets and certainly heaved a sigh. "I haven't long to wait. I'm about to die." As they say in Canton, "Your day is close at hand."

"How can I be compared to how I was when I was full of life?" How can I be compared to when I was in my prime? It's not the same."

R2 He examines in detail his change in appearance.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "Great King, your appearance should not decline so suddenly."

The king said, "World Honored One, the change has been a hidden transformation of which I honestly have not been aware. I have come to this gradually through the passing of winters and summers.

Commentary:

The Buddha heard King Prasenajit express inexhaustible regret and sigh sorrowfully. He was on the verge of dying. His youth was gone and he had probably lost the vitality he had as a young man When he was young he liked to exercise, play ball, and perhaps dance And he was always on the go. Now in his old age he could not do these sorts of things. So he felt very put out. So he said, "I'm old now. I cannot be compared to when I was in my youth. That time was truly blissful. The way I am now is really meaningless and boring."

The Buddha said, "Great King, your appearance should not decline so suddenly." Your body can't have gone completely bad. You still have something about you which is not old. You say that you are changing and going bad, but there is still something within you which does not change or go bad. Look within yourself and find it."

The king said, "World Honored One, the change has been a hidden transformation of which I honestly have not been aware." This matter of people getting old consists of a hidden transformation. You don't notice it. Youth becomes middle-aged and then old, and you don't know it has happened. Silently, imperceptibly, a change takes place. And so King Prasenajit replies, "I will say quite frankly that I haven't been aware of aging and I don't know how it is that I am old, and yet now the mark of old age is upon me. But I don't know what day I got old. **I have come to this gradually through the passing of winters and summers.** Summer and then winter, winter and then summer; one harvests in the autumn and stores for the winter: changing, shifting, and flowing, year by year." Thus he gradually got old, with white hair and a face full of uncountable wrinkles. His eyebrows were so long that sometimes, when he wanted to look at something, he'd have to part his eyebrows. Imagine what a bother that was.

Sutra:

"How did it happen? In my twenties, I was still young, but my features had aged since the time I was ten. My thirties were a further decline from my twenties, and now at sixty-two I look back on my fifties as hale and hearty.

Commentary:

"How did it happen? How did I gradually get to be so decrepit and old? I'm so old that my legs don't cooperate when I try to walk, and my hands shake when I try to eat. **In my twenties, I was still young, but my features had aged since the time I was ten.** At twenty I was no longer the child I was at ten; I was already an adult. **My thirties were a further decline from my twenties, and now at sixty-two I look back on my fifties as hale and hearty.** At thirty I was already older than at twenty, and at fifty I was a lot stronger than I am now. At fifty I could still lift well over a hundred pounds with my bare hands, but now it would be hard for me to manage thirty or forty pounds." Here King Prasenajit realizes that his old age has rendered him useless.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, I am contemplating these hidden transformations. Although the changes wrought by this process of dying are evident through the decades, I might consider them further in finer detail: these changes do not occur just in periods of twelve years; there are actually changes year by year. Not only are there yearly changes, there are also monthly transformations. Nor does it stop at monthly transformations; there are also differences day by day. Examining them closely, I find that kshana by kshana, thought after thought, they never stop.

Commentary:

King Prasenajit again called out to the Buddha, **"World Honored One, I am contemplating these hidden transformations.** I perceive that the doctrine of these hidden changes and silent transformations is in fact not easily known. **Although the changes**

wrought by this process of dying are evident through the decades, I might consider them further in finer detail: these changes do not occur just in periods of twelve years; there are actually changes year by year. Day by day I am perishing in a process that flows like water in its continual change. It is said, "As the light of time lessens, the light of life fades." Time has made me old. Just now I made a comparison decade by decade, but if you ask me to think about it in detail, I see that in fact there are changes not just every twelve or twenty-four years, but every year. **Not only are there yearly changes, there are also monthly transformations.** How could it stop with just month-by-month changes? **There are also differences day by day.** Every day I am older than on the day before. **Examining them closely, I find that kshana by kshana, thought after thought, they never stop.** I quiet my mind and ponder it deeply. I ask myself, how did I get old? What day did I get old? What year, what month, what time?"

What is a "kshana"? **The Prajna Sutra of the Humane King Who Protects His Country** explains that in every thought, brief as a thought is, there are ninety kshanas. In every kshana there are nine hundred productions and extinctions. It is not easy to understand, not easy to detect. To explain it to this point is to get into fine detail. Even in the extremely brief space of a kshana, the process of aging never ceases. And so by now I am so old I'm useless. The food I eat hasn't any flavor; when I sleep I feel my skin separating from my flesh and it is very painful; the manifestations of old age are suffering indeed!

R3 General conclusion that it must become extinct.

Sutra:

"And so I know my body will keep changing until it is extinct."

Commentary:

"And so I know…" King Prasenajit having finished explaining the principle of extinction – how at all times everything is in a state

of flux, that the appearance of birth and death is always inherent in things – said he knew his body **"will keep changing until it is extinct."**

P2 He points out that the seeing is not produced or extinguished.
Q1 The question is fixed and he promises to explain.

Sutra:

The Buddha told the great king, "By watching the ceaseless changes of these transformations, you awaken and know of your extinction, but do you also know that at the time of extinction there is something in your body which does not become extinct?"

King Prasenajit put his palms together and exclaimed, "I really do not know."

The Buddha said, "I will now show you the nature which is not produced and not extinguished.

Commentary:

After King Prasenajit finished saying how his body would certainly change and become extinct, **the Buddha told the great king, "By watching the ceaseless changes of these transformations** you notice that from when you were little you became middle-aged. From middle-age you got old. Once old, you eventually will die. So **you awaken and know of your extinction**. You know that in the future you will certainly come to the end of it all. **But do you also know that at the time of extinction there is something in your body which does not become extinct?"**

King Prasenajit put his palms together, bowed to the Buddha, and exclaimed. When the King heard the Buddha say that, he respectfully said, "**I really do not know.** I truly do not know this principle."

The Buddha said, "I will now show you the nature which is not produced and not extinguished." Your inherent nature doesn't change, but you have not yet realized this to be so. Now I will explain to help make you clear.

Q2 What he sees does not change.

Sutra:

"Great King, how old were you when you saw the waters of the Ganges?"

The king said, "When I was three years old my compassionate mother led me to visit the Goddess Jiva. We passed a river, and at the time I knew it was the waters of the Ganges."

Commentary:

The Buddha said, **"Great King, how old were you when you saw the waters of the Ganges?"**

The king said, "When I was three years old my compassionate mother led me to visit the Goddess Jiva. 'Eternal Life.' We went to seek for long life at the temple of the Goddess Jiva. **We passed a river, and at the time I knew it was the waters of the Ganges.** When I saw it, I knew at the time it was the Ganges River."

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "Great King, you have said that when you were twenty you had deteriorated from when you were ten. Day by day, month by month, year by year until you have reached sixty, in thought after thought there has been change. Yet when you saw the Ganges River at the age of three, how was it different from when you were thirteen?"

The king said, "It was no different from when I was three, and even now when I am sixty-two it is still no different."

Commentary:

The Buddha said to King Prasenajit, "**Great King, you have said**, let's just look at what you've said, **that when you were twenty you had deteriorated from when you were ten**. You were more out of shape than when you were ten, you were getting older. **Day by day, month by month, year by year until you have reached sixty, in thought after thought there has been change.** Every thought brings change. **Yet when you saw the Ganges River**

at the age of three, how was it different from when you were thirteen? But when you were three, when you saw the Ganges River, how was the water different from when you saw it at thirteen?

The king said, "It was no different from when I was three." King Prasenajit said, "It was the same as when I saw the water at three years old. It is not any different. **And even now when I am sixty-two it is still no different.** There are no two ways about it, it is still the same."

There are scholars who spend their efforts on superficialities and say that there are some questions linked with the age of King Prasenajit given here in the text. This is really just looking for something to do when there's nothing to do; eating one's fill and then wanting to haul garbage as if that were cleaning things up. They're got nothing better to do so they gather excrement from the toilets. So be it; it serves them right!

Q3 His ability to see is not extinguished.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "Now you are mournful that your hair is white and your face is wrinkled. In the same way that your face is definitely more wrinkled than it was in your youth, has the seeing with which you look at the Ganges aged, so that it is old now but was young when you looked at the river as a child in the past?"

The king said, "No, World Honored One."

Commentary:

The Buddha said again to King Prasenajit, **"Now you are mournful that your hair is white and your face is wrinkled. In the same way that your face is definitely more wrinkled than it was in your youth, has the seeing with which you look at the Ganges aged, so that it seems,** as you look, that the Ganges River, **is old now but was young when you looked at the river as a child in the past?** Is there a distinction from what you saw as a youth and

what you see now in your old age? Is there any difference in your seeing? The seeing with which you saw the Ganges at three years old and the seeing with which you see it now doesn't have any variation of young and old, does it?"

The king said, "No, World Honored One." Although the King was as stupid as a scholar, he knew it was not that way; he knew that there hadn't been any change. So he said decisively, "No World Honored One." His seeing hadn't changed.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "Great King, your face is in wrinkles, but the essential nature of your seeing has not yet wrinkled. What wrinkles is subject to change. What does not wrinkle does not change.

Commentary:

The Buddha said, "Great King, your face is in wrinkles, but the essential nature of your seeing has not yet wrinkled. Your seeing which views the Ganges has not wrinkled. The nature of seeing is not wrinkled; it is still the same. **What wrinkles is subject to change.** The wrinkles on your face display the change. **What does not wrinkle does not change.** Since the seeing doesn't have wrinkles, how can you say it changes? It doesn't change."

Sutra:

"What changes will become extinct, but what does not change is fundamentally free of production and extinction. How can it be subject to your birth and death? Furthermore, why bring up what Maskari Goshaliputra and the others say: that after the death of this body there is total extinction?"

Commentary:

"What changes will become extinct, but what does not change is fundamentally free of production and extinction. How can it be subject to your birth and death? Since it has no production and extinction how can you say that your seeing nature will undergo birth and death the same as your body**? Furthermore,**

why bring up what Maskari Goshaliputra, 'Not Seeing the Way,' **and the others say: that after the death of this body there is total extinction.** They all say that after the body dies everything perishes. It's all over. All they know about is permanence and annihilationism."

Q4 The King and the others are extremely happy.

Sutra:

The king heard these words, believed them, and realized that when the life of this body is finished, there will be rebirth. He and the entire great assembly were greatly delighted at having obtained what they had never had before.

Commentary:

The king, Prasenajit, **heard these words**, he **believed them**, **and realized that when the life of this body is finished**, after the death of the body, when it has been cast aside, **there will be rebirth.** One will go to the place of one's next rebirth. **He and the entire great assembly were greatly delighted –** they were so happy they jumped for joy – **at having obtained what they had never had before.** They said, "We never knew about this principle before. We were completely confused about the theory of birth and death, permanence and annihilationism."

Seeing is Not Lost

N4 He shows that the seeing is not lost.
O1 Because Ananda has awakened he has a doubt about something said previously.

Sutra:

Ananda then arose from his seat, made obeisance to the Buddha, put his palms together, knelt on both knees, and said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, if seeing and hearing are indeed neither produced nor extinguished, why did the World Honored One refer to us as people who have lost their true natures and who go about things in an upside-down way? I hope the World Honored One will give rise to great compassion and wash my dust and defilement away."

Commentary:

At that time **Ananda** had another question. So he Ananda **then arose from his seat**, stood up, **made obeisance to the Buddha, put his palms together, knelt on both knees, and said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, if seeing and hearing are indeed neither produced nor extinguished, why did the World Honored One refer to us as people who have lost their true natures and who go about things in an upside-down way?** You said we had 'lost' our basic natures and that we are upside-down. We do really perverted things. **I hope the World Honored One**

will give rise to great compassion and wash my dust and defilement away. Wash away the defilement of my doubts.

O2 The Thus Come One explains it is because of upside-downness that he said it was lost

P1 Then he uses an analogy of his arm being upside-down but not lost.

Q1 First he determines the appearance of an upside-down arm.

Sutra:

Then the Thus Come One let his golden arm fall so that his wheeled fingers pointed downward, and, showing Ananda, he said, "You see my mudra-hand: is it right side up or upside down?"

Ananda said, "Living beings in the world take it to be upside down. I do not know what is right side up and what is upside down."

Commentary:

The Buddha heard Ananda say that and **then the Thus Come One then the Thus Come One let his golden arm fall so that his wheeled fingers pointed downward, and, showing Ananda, he said, "You see my mudra-hand: is it right side up or upside down?** When I do this, is my hand right-side up or upside down?"

Ananda said, "Living beings in the world take it to be upside down, all beings in the world, all people would say it is upside down. **I do not know what is right side up and what is upside down.** I, Ananda, don't know what to call right-side up and what to call upside-down." He won't decide himself, he's really slippery. This way, if he's wrong, it won't have been his own opinion in the first place, it will have been that of "living beings."

Q2 He then determines the appearance of a right-side up arm.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "If people of the world take this as upside down, what do people of the world take to be right-side up?"

Ananda said, "They call it right-side up when the Thus Come One raises his arm, with the fingers of his tula-cotton hand pointing upward in the air."

Commentary:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "If people of the world you say the living beings of the world **take this as upside down, what do people of the world**, all the living beings, **take to be right-side up, I ask you?"**

Ananda said, "They call it right-side up when the Thus Come One raises his arm, with the fingers of his tula-cotton hand pointing upward in the air. When you hold your arm over your head, Buddha, that's called right-side up."

Q3 He makes clear it is upside-down, not lost.

Sutra:

The Buddha then held up his hand and said: "Worldly people are doubly deluded when they discriminate between an upright and inverted hand.

Commentary:

The Buddha then held up his hand and said: "Worldly people are doubly deluded when they discriminate between an upright and inverted hand. It's really deluded to call one right-side up and the other upside-down just because the position changes.

P2 He fits the analogy to the fact that the mind is upside-down but not lost.
Q1 He names the parts of the analogy.

Sutra:

"In the same way they will differentiate between your body and the Thus Come One's pure Dharmabody and will say that the Thus Come One's body is one of right and universal knowledge, while your body is upside down.

Commentary:

"Once there is confusion within confusion, they will think that your body and the Thus Come One's pure Dharmabody, the spiritual body, are different. **In the same way they will differentiate between your body and the Thus Come One's pure Dharmabody.** They are adding confusion to confusion and don't understand the principle.

"They **will say that the Thus Come One's body is one of right and universal knowledge, while your body is upside down.** They will say that the Thus Come One's body is proper and all-knowing because it is enlightened in the true sense. And they will say your bodies are upside down because of your delusion and ignorance. They will say your self-nature is inverted."

Q2 The body is devoid of upside-down and right-side up.

Sutra:

"But examine your bodies and the Buddha's closely for this upside-downess: what exactly does the term 'upside down' refer to?"

Thereupon Ananda and the entire great assembly were dazed, and they stared unblinking at the Buddha. They did not know in what way their bodies and minds were upside down.

Commentary:

"But examine your bodies and the Buddha's closely for this upside-downess. Look into it well, look at it carefully," the Buddha said, "for this upside-downness. **What exactly does the term 'upside down' refer to?"**

Thereupon Ananda and the entire great assembly were dazed like blind people who can't see anything **and they stared unblinking at the Buddha.** They didn't take their eyes off the Thus Come One. **They did not know in what way their bodies and minds were upside down.** They couldn't find the point at which their bodies were upside down. They were confused again.

Q3 Upside-down and right-side up come from the mind.
R1 First the Thus Come One displays compassion and informs the assembly.

Sutra:

The Buddha's compassion arose and he took pity on Ananda and on all in the great assembly and he spoke to the great assembly in a voice that swept over them like the ocean-tide.

Commentary:

The Buddha's compassion arose and he took pity on Ananda and on all in the great assembly. When the Buddha saw that Ananda and the members of the great assembly were confused and did not know in what way they were upside down, the Buddha displayed compassion **and he spoke to the great assembly in a voice that swept over them like the ocean-tide.** Gathering them in with the tremendous power of his voice, he captured their total attention and then explained for them.

R2 He uses former teaching to make clear the appearance of right-side up.

Sutra:

"All of you good people, I have often said that form and mind and all conditions, as well as dharmas pertaining to the mind – all the conditioned dharmas – are manifestations of the mind only. Your bodies and your minds all appear within the wonder of the bright, true, essential, wonderful mind.

Commentary:

Having given rise to great compassion, the Buddha said, **"All of you good people,"** referring to the large number of good men and women who were there. **"I have often said that form and mind and all conditions, as well as dharmas pertaining to the mind – all the conditioned dharmas:"** He said, "In the past I have said this again and again." "Form" refers to the form-dharmas, and "mind" to the mind-dharmas. According to the *Shastra of the Door to Understanding the Hundred Dharmas*, there are eleven form-dharmas and eight mind-dharmas. The mind-dharmas belong to the

eighth consciousnesses of the "mind-king." There are fifty-one dharmas belonging to the mind, here referred to as the servants of the mind, and there are twenty-four dharmas which do not interact; that is, they do not interact with form-dharmas, with mind-dharmas, or with unconditioned dharmas. Finally, six unconditioned dharmas make 100 dharmas. "All the conditions" refer to four kinds of conditions:

1. conditions based on immediate causes;
2. augmenting conditions;
3. sequential conditions, which are also called equal unintermittent conditions; and
4. conditioned conditions.

"Are manifestations of the mind only." All dharmas are produced from conditions and do not extend beyond the manifestation of a single thought of the true mind. From where do all dharmas – the mountains, the rivers, the great earth, the vegetation, and all the myriad appearances – come into being? They come forth from minds; all the myriad things are contained within the mind. It is not that these things contain the mind; but rather the opposite: absolutely everything in the environment, both natural and manmade, is contained in a single thought of the mind; and all are produced from the mind. If you recognize your original true mind, all these things cease to exist.

"Your bodies and your minds all appear within the wonder of the bright, true, essential, wonderful mind." "Your body" refers to the body you now have, and "your mind" refers to your conscious mind. Both are manifested in the wonderful mind.

Is it the case that above and beyond the conscious mind there is yet another wonderful mind?

No. It is just in the basic substance of the conscious mind that there is the wonderful mind, but because people don't know how to use the wonderful mind, they think their conscious mind is their

mind. Actually they are mistaking a thief for their son, and for that reason they become confused.

R3 He scolds them for losing recognition of the appearance of right-side up.
S1 He scolds them for losing the true and recognizing the false.

Sutra:

"Why do I say that you have lost track of what is fundamentally wonderful in you, the perfect, wonderful bright mind, and that in the midst of your bright and enlightened nature, you mistake the false for the real because of ignorance and delusion?

Commentary:

"Why do I say that you, all of you people, **have lost track of what is fundamentally wonderful in you, the perfect, wonderful bright mind**, the fundamentally wonderful permanently dwelling true mind which is fundamentally subtle and wonderful, the perfect subtle wonderful mind which possesses an extremely valuable light, **and that in the midst of your bright and enlightened nature, you mistake the false for the real because of ignorance and delusion?** You think you understand clearly about the pure nature and bright substance of your permanently dwelling true mind, but actually you do not understand. You have not perceived that you have a perfect wonderful bright mind, the precious light of your wonderful nature. You think the conscious mind that you perceive is your mind. You think that it is the mind which you are clear about, which you have understood and become enlightened to. But actually that is only confusion within confusion, and you have not understood. It is your upside-downness, it is the problem of your mistaking a thief for your son.

S2 He explains the dharma of the characteristics of recognizing it as lost.

Sutra:

"Mental dimness turns into dull emptiness. This emptiness, in the dimness, unites with darkness to become form.

Commentary:

"Mental dimness turns into dull emptiness." Originally the wonderful bright mind is devoid of awakening or confusion, so why do we suddenly "lose" the essence of our self-nature? It is due to the initial thought of ignorance, here referred to as "mental dimness," which obscures True Emptiness and changes it into dull emptiness. This dull emptiness is like the empty space appearing in a dream-world. This is the Appearance of Karma, the first of the Three Subtle Appearances.

"This emptiness, in the dimness, unites with darkness to become form – the form of darkness." This is also the beginning of the doctrine of the Twelve Causal Conditions: ignorance conditions activity. The dull emptiness, the deluded mind, based as it is in ignorance now, turns the inherent light of wisdom into the falseness of subjective perception. This is the Appearance of Turning, the second of the Three Subtle Appearances.

Out of longing for objects of perception, since in the beginning the Appearance of Karma is not visible, the subjective seeing stares long and hard until the deluded mind gives rise to form as its projection and manifestation. Just as in the dream-world, the dull-minded dreamer often experiences the existence of a dream-body, a dream-mind, and the illusory environment in which they find themselves, including mirage-like mountains, waters, and the like. This is the Appearance of Manifestation, the third of the Three Subtle appearances.

Sutra:

"Stimulated by false thinking, the form takes the shape of a body.

Commentary:

"Stimulated by false thinking, the form takes the shape of a body." Within the emptiness and ignorance, the darkness binds together to become form – the kind as though existent in a dream. Form is mixed with false thinking. Ignorance conditions activity,

activity conditions consciousness, and consciousness conditions name and form. False thinking is the consciousness, and when it takes shape as the body, that is the name and form. We have bodies because our false thinking creates them.

Sutra:

"As causal conditions come together there are perpetual internal disturbances which tend to gallop outside. Such inner disturbances are often mistaken for the nature of mind.

Commentary:

"As causal conditions come together there are perpetual internal disturbances which tend to gallop outside." Many kinds of conditions are brought together to form the body and mind. At the time of this external movement you can say that the six entrances, the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, come into being. Name and form condition the six entrances, and the six entrances condition contact. The tendency to gallop outside is a kind of rudimentary awareness of contact, such as a small child has. In this instance it refers to the sense organs being drawn outside by the sense data. The contact and the false-thinking mind go outside and race back and forth at a gallop at random all over the place, because one has no genuine wisdom. One doesn't know where to run to; one can't tell north, south, east, and west from one another. This is disorder and disturbance, and **"Such inner disturbances are often mistaken for the nature of mind."** You think this kind of lack of clarity is the nature of your mind. Since you lack clarity it is as if you had lost it – lost your own genuine perfect wonderful bright mind, the precious light of your wonderful nature. But it is not a true loss; your true nature only seems to be lost, because you take the mark of disorder and disturbance to be the nature of your mind, the mind which has perfect transparency and bright comprehension, and thus you are disordered and disturbed.

Sutra:

"The primary misconception about the mind and body is the false view that the mind dwells in the physical body.

Commentary:

You have the confusion of attachment and you lack enlightenment. **"The primary misconception about the mind and body is the false view that the mind dwells in the physical body."** You think that your true mind is inside the physical body. This is the first confusion.

Sutra:

"You do not know that the physical body, as well as the mountains, the rivers, empty space, and the great earth are all within the wonderful bright true mind.

Commentary:

Most people think the mind is within the body. This is an extremely great mistake. It is outside our body? It is not outside either. But as I say, it is also not the case that our mind is in our body. It is that we people are within the true mind. So the Sutra says, **"You do not know that the physical body, as well as the mountains, the rivers, empty space, and the great earth are all within the wonderful bright true mind."** All these various kinds of things are within your fundamental wonderful bright true mind. They are not outside. So you should know that our mind encompasses empty space and the ten thousand things. It is not that empty space and the ten thousand things contain us. If you understand this doctrine you have not lost your true nature and your true mind.

S3 An analogy explains the characteristic of losing one's recognition.

Sutra:

"It is like ignoring hundreds of thousands of clear pure seas and taking notice of only a single bubble, seeing it as the entire ocean, as the whole expanse of great and small seas.

Commentary:

"What is it like? I'll give you an analogy**. It is like ignoring hundreds of thousands of clear pure seas and taking notice of**

only a single bubble.” You only recognize one bubble of water on the surface of all those great seas. You say, “This bubble is the great sea.” Isn’t this a grave mistake? The situation is the same with the mind in our body that Ananda is speaking of. That mind within our body is as small as a bubble on the sea. The mind beyond the body, our true mind, is as vast as hundreds of thousands of great seas. You reject the hundreds of thousands of great seas; you don’t recognize them; you don’t know they are seas. You take an infinitesimal bubble to be the sea. In the same way, the pure nature and bright substance of your permanently dwelling true mind, the substance of the Dharma nature, pervades the Dharma realm. It is everywhere, and it is our true mind. But you don’t realize it is your true mind; you think that what is in your body is your mind. That is like **seeing** one miniscule bubble **as the entire ocean, as the whole expanse of great and small seas**. This is the same mistake as to take that small mind in your body to be your true mind. Your true mind is not inside, and it is not outside. All of you are complete with it, but you don’t recognize it. You don’t recognize your own true mind.

O3 Concludes by severely scolding them for their confusion and upside downness and ties it to the former analogy.

Sutra:

“You people are doubly deluded among the deluded. Such inversion does not differ from that caused by my lowered hand. The Thus Come One says you are most pitiable.”

Commentary:

“You people are doubly deluded among the deluded. You people who have not accomplished the fruition or obtained the state of no outflows are confused within confusion. **Such inversion does not differ from that caused by my lowered hand.** When I lowered my hand, you said that it was upside-down. When I raised it, you said it was right-side-up. In fact there was no upside-down or right-side-up to the hand. There is no upside-down or right-side-up, but you set up names and call it ‘upside-down’ or ‘right-side-up.’ This is confusion within confusion. Originally there was no

problem, and you created a problem. Originally there wasn't all this trouble, and you have gone looking for trouble. That is what is meant by someone being doubly deluded among the deluded. It is the same confusion which mistakes a single bubble for the great seas; there's no difference.

"The Thus Come One says you are most pitiable." The Buddha looks upon such doubly confused people with sympathy and pity. People who pile confusion upon confusion are sad indeed.

Seeing Does Not Return

N5 He shows that seeing does not return.
O1 Ananda seeks to decisively renounce his attachment.

Sutra:

Having received the Buddha's compassionate rescue and profound instruction, Ananda's tears fell, and he folded his hands and said to the Buddha, "I have heard these wonderful sounds of the Buddha and have realized that the wonderful bright mind is fundamentally perfect; it is the eternally dwelling mind-ground.

Commentary:

As the beginning of the Sutra relates, Ananda fell into the hands of people of an external path and was in grave danger, since he was on the verge of destroying the precept-substance. The Buddha instructed Manjushri Bodhisattva to use the Shurangama Mantra to rescue Ananda and bring him back, and the Buddha then instructed him repeatedly, one doesn't know how many times. So the Sutra says, **having received the Buddha's compassionate rescue and profound instruction, Ananda's tears fell, and he folded his hands and said to the Buddha.** Ananda was so grateful to the Buddha that he didn't know what to do, so he wept. His tears kept falling as he spoke.

"I have heard these wonderful sounds of the Buddha and have realized that the wonderful bright mind is fundamentally perfect; it is the eternally dwelling mind-ground. Having been instructed in subtle and wonderful doctrines as have just been spoken, such Dharma sounds as these, I understand now that the wonderful bright mind, the mind-ground, is fundamentally perfect, perfect from the beginning. I now understand that it is the pure nature and bright substance of the permanently dwelling true mind."

Sutra:

"But now in awakening to the Dharma-sounds that the Buddha is speaking, it is my conditioned mind which I use to contemplate them reverently. Having just obtained the mind, I do not acknowledge that it is the fundamental mind-ground.

Commentary:

"But now in awakening to the Dharma-sounds that the Buddha is speaking, it is my conditioned mind which I use to contemplate them reverently." Ananda says that in understanding the subtle, wonderful Dharma-sounds and in respectfully looking upon the Buddha's countenance and contemplating the sound of his voice, he is still using his mind which seizes on conditions. **"Having just obtained the mind, I do not acknowledge that it is the fundamental mind-ground."** Ananda says he has obtained it, but he doesn't dare acknowledge it. He doesn't dare recognize it and admit completely that it is his true mind. The Buddha explained to him, "The mountains, the rivers, the great earth, everything is your true mind. They are all within your true mind." The Buddha explained that the seeing nature is just the permanently dwelling true mind of each one of us. Ananda understood the doctrine, but he still doesn't dare accept it and make it his true mind. He hasn't turned himself around immediately. So instead here he is asking questions again. Ananda always has something to say.

Sutra:

"I pray that the Buddha will take pity on me and proclaim the perfect sound to pull out my doubts by the roots and enable me to return to the unsurpassed Way."

Commentary:

Why doesn't Ananda dare accept the doctrine?

He says that when he listened to the Buddha speak Dharma, he was listening with his mind which seizes upon conditions. He thinks that if there were no mind which seized upon conditions, no dharma would be heard. This is a mistake. Here is Ananda with yet another layer of delusion.

He said, "It's all right to reject my mind which seizes upon conditions, but if I put aside my mind which seizes upon conditions, what will I use to listen to Dharma? I won't have a mind." He still thinks that the mind which seizes upon conditions is his true mind. He doesn't know that your mind which seizes upon conditions, which makes discriminations, is the conscious mind which is subject to production and extinction. If you can put aside and listen to Dharma, then you will be genuinely listening to the Dharma. If you listen to the Dharma with the true mind, all dharmas are true. If you listen to the Dharma with your mind which seizes upon conditions, then no matter how much you listen, it always seems to be right and yet somehow not right. There's a continual doubt. You should receive the Dharma with the true mind.

But Ananda doesn't know that, and so he doesn't dare accept what Shakyamuni Buddha said about the true mind. He was afraid that if he accepted the true mind, he wouldn't be able to listen to the Dharma, and listening to the Dharma was what was most important to him. He thought, "It doesn't matter to me if it is the mind subject to production and extinction or what kind of mind it is, what counts is whether I get to listen to the Dharma." It is this point that he has not understood and that causes him to have doubts.

Since he didn't accept the doctrine, he said, **"I pray that the Buddha will take pity on me and proclaim the perfect sound."** The "perfect sound" is the perfect unobstructed sound. The perfect sound is the one perfect sound. It is said, "The Buddha speaks the Dharma with one sound; living beings understand it, each according to his kind." When people hear the one perfect sound, they understand it; when gods hear it, gods understand it; when ghosts hear it, ghosts understand it; even when animals hear it, they understand it. Every category of living beings – people, gods, Bodhisattvas, Arhats, great bhikshus, animals, beings in the hells, hungry ghosts – each understands the doctrines which the Buddhas speak with a single voice. When the Buddha speaks the Dharma, living beings only need have conditions with the Buddha, and no matter how far away they are from him, they can hear it just the same as if they were right at the Buddha's side. They don't notice the distance. Would you say that is wonderful or not?

So Ananda asks the Buddha to instruct him with the perfect sound, and "**to pull out my doubts by the roots and enable me to return to the unsurpassed Way.** I have not gotten rid of my doubts yet. The roots of doubt are still in my mind. If the Buddha will help me pull them out, I will be able to understand the unsurpassed doctrine."

O2 The power of the Thus Come One provides refutation and revelation.
P1 He refutes that the conditioned mind has a place it returns to.
Q1 He refutes the place of conditioned objective dharmas.

Sutra:

The Buddha told Ananda, "You still listen to the Dharma with the conditioned mind, and so the Dharma becomes conditioned as well, and you do not obtain the Dharma-nature. It is like when someone points his finger at the moon to show it to someone else. Guided by the finger, that person should see the moon. If he looks at the finger instead and mistakes it for the moon, he loses not only the moon but the finger also. Why? He mistakes the pointing finger for the bright moon.

Commentary:

Granting Ananda's request that his doubts be removed, the Buddha said, **"You still listen to the Dharma with the conditioned mind, and so the Dharma becomes conditioned as well.** You are still using your mind that seizes upon conditions, and so as you listen to the Dharma it also becomes conditioned. It turns into a dharma subject to production and extinction, **and you do not obtain the Dharma-nature.** You do not obtain the basic substance and nature of the Dharma. **It is like when someone points his finger at the moon to show it to someone else. Guided by the finger, that person should see the moon.** I'll give you an example. I point to the moon and say to you, 'See? That's the moon.' The appropriate things for you to do is look at the moon. **If he looks at the finger instead and mistakes it for the moon, he loses not only the moon but the finger also.** But you don't look at the moon I'm pointing at; you look at my finger and say, 'Ah, that's the moon. That's what the moon is like.' You take the finger for the moon, and so you lose the moon. You miss out." The Sutra speaks earlier of "losing your true nature." Here someone looks at a finger and takes it for the moon, and so he not only loses the moon, he doesn't even recognize the other persons' finger. It is lost too. **Why? He mistakes the pointing finger for the bright moon.** He recognizes neither the finger nor the moon. Who is he? It is Ananda who is like that. The moon is the true mind. The Dharma which is spoken is the finger, since the Buddha speaks the Dharma to point to the true mind. And so the light of the true mind is lost, and even the Dharma is not understood. Thus the Buddha said, "You listen to the Dharma with your conditioned mind, and the Dharma becomes conditioned also." Would you say a person like that is pitiable? I think that kind of person is pitiable.

Sutra:

"Not only does he lose the finger, but he also fails to recognize light and darkness. Why? He mistakes the substance of the finger for the bright nature of the moon, and so he does

not understand the two natures of light and darkness. The same is true of you.

Commentary:

“Not only does he lose the finger, but he also fails to recognize light and darkness.” He doesn’t recognize either the finger or the moon for what they are, and so they are lost. And yet, neither is really lost. They are still there. It is just that he doesn’t understand. He also doesn’t understand or recognize light and darkness. In other words, this person basically doesn’t know what is meant by enlightenment or what is meant by the lack of enlightenment, what is meant by ignorance and what is meant by true understanding.

“Why? He mistakes the substance of the finger for the bright nature of the moon.” He confuses the nature of the substance of the finger which is dark, and the bright nature of the moon. Isn’t that upside-down? Everyone knows it is. But he wants to do it anyway. “And so he does not understand the two natures of light and darkness.” He doesn’t even know what is meant by the concept of light and darkness. This is utter stupidity, wouldn’t you say?

“**The same is true of you.** Ananda, you are just like the person who mistakes the finger for the moon and completely fails to understand light and darkness. You listen to the Dharma with the mind which seizes upon conditions and you’re afraid that if you accept the doctrine of the true mind, you won’t be able to hear the Dharma. You think the true mind is just in the Dharma, and so you mistake the finger for the moon. You can’t tell light from darkness, which means you don’t have any genuine wisdom. Go ahead and listen to the Dharma with the conditioned mind as much as you want, but the more you listen the stupider you’ll become. The more you run, the farther away you’ll get.” One doesn’t know how Ananda felt then. Earlier, when he lost track of his mind, he was upset and startled and didn’t know what to do. He leapt from his

seat. Now that the Buddha has told him he has lost both the finger and the moon, one doesn't know what he thought.

The Buddha speaks Dharma to point to the true mind. But Ananda mistakenly heard that the true mind was just in the Dharma. So the Buddha used the analogy of the finger and the moon to point this out to Ananda.

Q2 He refutes the place of conditioned subjective dharmas.

Sutra:

"If you take what distinguishes the sound of my speaking Dharma to be your mind, then that mind itself, apart from the sound which is distinguished, should have a nature which makes distinctions. It is like the guest who lodges overnight at an inn; he stops temporarily and then goes on. He does not dwell there permanently, whereas the innkeeper does not go anywhere: he is the host of the inn.

Commentary:

"If you take what distinguishes the sound of my speaking Dharma to be your mind, then that mind itself, apart from the sound which is distinguished, should have a nature which makes distinctions. If the mind you are using, the mind which seizes upon conditions and makes distinctions, is indeed your true mind, then it should have a distinction – making a nature separate from the distinctions that it makes. When you are not listening to Dharma, you would still have a nature which is making distinctions; that's how it would have to be. Why?

"It is like the guest who lodges overnight at an inn; he stops temporarily and then goes on. He does not dwell there permanently. He stays for two or three days; he can't live in the hotel forever. **Whereas the innkeeper does not go anywhere: he is the host of the inn.** The person who looks after the hotel can't go away. The distinction-making mind is like someone who stays temporarily in a hotel, while the genuine true mind, which cannot go, is like the inn-keeper."

Sutra:

"Likewise, if it is truly your mind, it does not go anywhere. However, in the absence of sound it has no discriminating nature of its own. Can you tell the reason why?

Commentary:

"Likewise, if it is truly your mind, it does not go anywhere. When the sound ceases, the mind which distinguishes it is not there. But if it were indeed the true mind that distinguishes it, that would mean that the true mind would depart when the sound ceases. **However, in the absence of sound it has no discriminating nature of its own. Can you tell the reason why?** Yet the true mind is the host, not the guest; it does not leave. Therefore it can't be the true mind which makes the distinctions. You have made a mistake."

Sutra:

"This, then, applies not only to the distinguishing of sound; in distinguishing my appearance, there is no distinction-making nature apart from the mark of form.

Commentary:

"This, then, applies not only to the distinguishing of sound. When there is sound there is the making of distinctions, and when there is no sound, no distinctions are made. This doctrine does not apply only to sounds. **In distinguishing my appearance, there is no distinction-making nature apart from the mark of form.** When you look at my thirty-two hallmarks and eighty subtle characteristics, you make distinctions among them; when you are separated from them, you do not, and the discriminating nature is not present."

Some people argue, "I listen to the sounds of the Dharma being spoken and when I go home I can still hear it in my mind. I look at things, and when I close my eyes I still have an impression of them. It is as if I were still looking at them."

Would you say that is true or false? Are you really hearing? It is just an impression in your eighth consciousness, a memory, which

is meant by the "shadows of discriminations of objects of mind;" it is not real. It is an illusory awareness. It is not an actual distinction being made, because apart from objects which are distinguished, there is no distinction-making nature.

Sutra:

"Thus even when the making of distinctions is totally absent, when there is no form and no emptiness – the obscurity which Goshali and the others take to be the 'profound truth' – in the absence of causal conditions, the distinction-making nature ceases to exist.

Commentary:

The Buddha has just explained the doctrine that in the absence of sound there is no distinction-making nature, and that apart from the dust of form there is no distinction-making nature. "Thus – the same is true – **even when the making of distinctions is totally absent, when there is no form and no emptiness.**" When you reach a state in which all making of distinctions is gone, you can't say it is either form or emptiness; it is neither. It is also the state of maintaining an "inner composure." Followers of external paths cultivate that kind of profound truth which is total oblivion. They think it is the highest and most wonderful experience. This is **"the obscurity which Goshali and the others take to be the 'profound truth'"**. The Sanskrit name "Goshali" is interpreted to mean "cowshed." Maybe Goshali lived next to a cowshed, or perhaps he lived in a cowshed, and so he was called "cowshed." Some say "cowshed" was his mother's name. But I don't believe his mother was a cow. Goshali was one of the six masters of external paths, and he and the others fell into a state of obscurity, that is, of confusion and lack of understanding. They reached the state where the making of distinctions is totally absent, and because they basically did not understand, they became obscured. The Chinese word *mei* (昧) obscure, is one of the two characters used to transliterate the Sanskrit word samadhi. But the character *mei* alone does not refer to samadhi. Instead it is rather like sleep, and yet one is not asleep.

You say you are awake, and yet you are muddled. The Buddha is talking about this state in this passage, not about samadhi. When one enters the samadhi Buddhism speaks of, one remains absolutely clear and aware, but these external-path practitioners the Buddha is referring to are muddled. When they are in that state, they feel they are one with the life-force of heaven and earth; their bodies are identical with it. Heaven and earth are indestructible, and they are also indestructible. But they don't understand. They do have a little bit of spiritual penetration of a certain kind, like that of a first-stage Arhat, but they do not have the penetrations of one who has accomplished the fruition. There are many distinctions which must be made when one starts talking about spiritual penetrations. There are not just one but many kinds.

These masters of external paths call their lack of understanding the "profound truth." "Profound" means the absence of everything. Everything is empty. But it is still not genuine emptiness; it is only dull emptiness, a state like waking and yet like sleep, in which you "do not perceive your own perception, and are not aware of your own awareness." They call this "profound truth" the highest state one can attain. That is their theory.

"In the absence of causal conditions, the distinction-making nature ceases to exist." Their profound truth is separate from the conditions of all dharmas, and it has no distinction-making nature when the conditions of all dharmas are absent. As soon as conditions of dharmas arise, these people still have a distinction-making nature. So this is the profound truth of the external paths.

Q3 Points out that everything returns to something.

Sutra:

"How can we say that the nature of your mind plays the part of host since everything perceived by it returns to something else?"

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha said to Ananda, "You think it is your conditioned mind which listens to Dharma. If you listen to the Dharma with a mind that seizes upon conditions, then the nature of the Dharma is also conditioned. That mind of yours doesn't make distinctions when apart from the dust. It hasn't any distinction-making nature of its own. **How can we say that the nature of your mind plays the part of host since everything perceived by it returns to something else?** Everything about the nature of your mind should return somewhere else, as when you borrow something from someone and then return it. If the mind exists because of the dust, then it should return to the dust. If everything returns to something else, then who is your host?"

P2 He reveals that the nature of seeing does not return to anything.
Q1 Ananda seeks instruction about that which does not return.

Sutra:

Ananda said, "If every state of our mind returns to something else as its cause, then why does the wonderful bright original mind mentioned by the Buddha return nowhere? I hold out the hope that the Buddha will shower us with such compassion as to enlighten us on this point."

Commentary:

Now Ananda is even more in the dark, even more confused. **Ananda said, "If every state of our mind returns to something else –** if everything about my mind is not my own, but must be returned to others **– then why does the wonderful bright original mind mentioned by the Buddha return nowhere?** How come that fine, subtle, wonderful, fundamental, originally permanently dwelling true mind of which you speak, Thus Come One, has no place to go back to? The more I listen to this doctrine, the more confused I get and the less I understand. **I hold out the hope that the Buddha will shower us with such compassion as to enlighten us on this point.** The Dharma-body, the Reward-body, and the Response-body of the Thus Come One are all very tall. "Now my

sole wish," Ananda says, "is that the Thus Come One will look down upon me and pity me. For the sake of me, Ananda," he says, "please explain the doctrine of the non-retreating of the true mind."

Q2 The Thus Come One reveals it in detail.
R1 He points out by analogy that the essence of seeing is true.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "As you now see me, the essence of your seeing is fundamentally bright. If the profound bright original mind is compared to the moon, the essence of your seeing is the second moon rather than its reflection.

Commentary:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "As you now see me, the essence of your seeing is fundamentally bright. The essence of your seeing, which sees my thirty-two hallmarks and eighty subtle characteristics, has the basic characteristic of clarity. But **if the profound bright original mind is compared to the moon, the essence of your seeing is the second moon rather than its reflection.** The essence of seeing is basically the eighth consciousness which is called the mind-king. The seeing of the mind-king can go to the side of the good, or it can go to the side of the bad. If it ascends, it penetrates through to the Buddha-nature. If it descends, it penetrates through into the seventh consciousness. Although the substance of the eighth consciousness is not in itself our true mind, our true mind is contained within the eighth consciousness. So don't make a mistake here and think that by saying the essence of seeing is not the wonderfully essential bright mind, the Buddha does not dare recognize it as the true mind either. The essence of seeing is the true mind. The Buddha has already proved this. The seeing which sees is the true mind, but it is like a second moon, not like the moon's reflection. How is this? If you press against your eye with your finger, the eye will see two moons in response to the pressure. But those two moons are one moon, the one real moon, not a reflection like the moon seen in water. The Buddha is saying that the eighth consciousness, the mind-king, is

the basic substance of our true mind. You should not mistakenly think that the eighth consciousness is not the true mind.

R2 He promises to show him what does not return to anything.

Sutra:

"You should listen attentively, for I am now going to show you the place of no returning.

Commentary:

"Ananda, **you should listen attentively, for I am now going to show you the place of no returning.** Ananda, you should pay close attention. Don't be muddled when I am speaking. Listen well. Now I am going to instruct you, just as you asked, about the true mind and about how it does not return anywhere." The Buddha begins by asking Ananda a question.

R3 He shows how the eight appearances all return to something else.

Sutra:

"Ananda, this great lecture hall is open to the east. It is flooded with light when the sun rises in the sky. It is dark at midnight during a new moon or when obscured by clouds or fog. Looking out through open doors and windows your vision is unimpeded; facing walls or houses your vision is hindered. Your vision is causally conditioned in such places where there are forms of distinctive features; in dull void, you can see only emptiness. Your vision will be distorted when the objects of seeing are shrouded in dust and vapor; you will perceive clearly when the air is fresh.

Commentary:

Ananda, this great lecture hall is open to the east. It is flooded with light when the sun rises in the sky. The Buddha's great lecture hall where he spoke the *Shurangama Sutra* held a vast number of Great Bodhisattvas, Great Arhats, and great bhikshus, who had come from throughout the three thousand great-thousand

worlds of the ten directions. When the sun ascends the sky, its light shines into this lecture hall.

"It is dark at midnight during a new moon or when obscured by clouds or fog." The sun mounting the sky represents the light of wisdom in people, which can illumine and destroy their darkness. The clouds and fog bringing dimness and obscurity represent people's stupidity. When there are clouds in space and fog on the ground, you cannot see anything. That stands for people in the height of stupidity, who are totally lacking in wisdom and do not understand the principle behind anything. They don't know where the road is, where the Way is. They want to cultivate the Way but they cannot find it. They want to perform good deeds, but they don't know how to go about it in the right way.

People's wisdom is light and their stupidity is darkness. But what makes the difference between them? Can we think to ourselves, "Ah, I'm wise. I'm really smart," and thereby gain wisdom? No. The more you think you have wisdom and the smarter you think you are, the stupider you are, as stupid as a pig. A pig is incapable of thinking himself into intelligence. If you think that you yourself are intelligent, you are the stupidest sort of person, because you are too self-satisfied. "Look at me," you say. "No one can equal me." If no one can equal you, then you aren't even human! If you were a person, then it wouldn't be the case that people couldn't equal you, since people are all alike. Do you understand? This is an extremely important point.

If' you weren't stupid, then no matter what you were like, you wouldn't be able to consider yourself incomparable. You wouldn't be arrogant and self-satisfied. "Look at me, I am first." This is the point of view of extreme stupidity. Those who like to be first don't even count. Why? Because if you like to be first, everyone has your number. If you are genuinely first, then no number is involved. Being first doesn't count for people who are really number one. People who are incredibly stupid look upon themselves as intelligent, but truly intelligent people are not aware of their intelligence.

They are incapable of pondering the question of their own intelligence. In the darkness one cannot see anything at all, but, like the blind man who can't see anything either, one thinks one is smarter than anyone else.

"Looking out through open doors and windows your vision is unimpeded. From inside, one can see outside. You penetrate through without any obstruction by means of the five eyes and six spiritual penetrations." One day one of my disciples told me, "After lunch when everyone is supposed to be working, some people go to sleep." How did he know people were sleeping? Had they told him? It is because he has the Buddha-eye, and so he knows what everyone is doing.

"What are you minding other people's business for?" I asked him. It used to be, when it was just me that people might do something and not tell me about it, thinking that I didn't know. So I wouldn't pay any attention to the matter either. Now I have a helper, a deputy. I've told him to tell me about the faults he finds in others. Now that someone is telling me, I have proof, and so I can cross-examine anyone who is at fault. But you should not be afraid. I don't intend to ask about small matters. If something of major importance happens, then I will ask.

This disciple is my helper and if anyone steals something, my helper sees it; if anyone kills someone, he knows it. If I want to tend to trivial matters I can do so at any time. If I do not want to tend to trivial matters, it is possible to make every-thing disappear. So those of you who are thinking of stealing things, don't be frightened. And those of you who want to do things which you don't want me to know about also needn't be afraid. For the time being I am still not paying any attention to these small matters.

"Facing walls or houses your vision is hindered. Where there cracks, seeing penetrates, but where there no cracks it does not. **Your vision is causally conditioned in such places where there are forms of distinctive features.** The places where there are distinctions are all the states you see, whether they be mountains,

rivers, the great earth, groves, fountains, everything which can be distinguished – high and low, good and bad, houses, porches, verandas, cottages, and waterways. Those are distinctions made by the mind, and therefore are conditions. **In dull void, you can see only emptiness.** Dark, dull emptiness, devoid of efficacy, is the place where there is no awareness; there is emptiness. **Your vision will be distorted when the objects of seeing are shrouded in dust and vapor.**" "Vapor" refers to the places where mist rises up from the earth. When there is no sun, the vapors look like smoke, but when the sun comes out, there is nothing there at all. "Dust" refers to a place where the wind picks up the dust and sand and blows it about. Both mist and dust darken the air and distort it, like the distortion caused by heat-mirage, which makes things appear wavy and not straight. **You will perceive clearly when the air is fresh.** The text refers to a freshness like the pure, clear sky just after a rain. "Fresh" air refers to the moist, clean atmosphere.

Sutra:

"Ananda, observe all these transitory characteristics as I now return each to its place of origin. What are the basic origins? Ananda, among all these transitions, the 'light' returns to the sun. Why? Without the sun there is no light; therefore the reason for light belongs with the sun, and so it can be returned to the sun.

"'Darkness' returns to the new moon. 'Penetration' returns to the doors and windows while 'obstruction' returns to the walls and eaves. 'Conditions' return to distinctions. 'Emptiness' returns to dull emptiness. 'Darkness' and 'distortion' return to the mist and haze. Bright 'purity' returns to freshness, and nothing that exists in this world goes beyond these kinds.

Commentary:

The Buddha went on to say, **"Ananda, observe all these transitory characteristics as I now return each to its place of origin.** Whether they be light or darkness, penetration or

obstruction, conditions or dull emptiness, purity or turbidity, all these eight kinds of characteristics can be returned to the place they came from. **What are the basic origins?** What are the places they come from? **Ananda, among all these transitions:** you should listen and be particularly attentive to what I am going to explain to you about these various transformations, these eight kinds of transitory characteristics. **The 'light' returns to the sun. Why? Without the sun there is no light.** I'll give light back to the sun. Without the sun, there is no light; when there is no light, the light has returned to the sun. **Therefore the reason for light belongs with the sun, and so it can be returned to the sun.** Therefore, I'm taking the light and returning it to the sun. Would you agree, Ananda? Do you have any opinion?" Ananda didn't open his mouth, although if he had had another doubt or a question or something he wished to say, he could have spoken at this point, but he didn't, so the Buddha continued speaking. "'Darkness' returns to the new moon." I'll give the darkness to the new moon. In Chinese, the full moon is called *pai yueh* (白月), "white moon," and the new moon is called *hei yueh* (黑月), "black moon," but this does not mean that the moon gives off a black light. That would be to translate so literally as to destroy the meaning. When you eat, you should be able to digest the food, and it is the same with the text of the Sutra. Don't think the *Shurangama Sutra* says the moon gives off a black light; that's to eat and not digest. What good would that be?

"'Penetration' returns to the doors and windows while 'obstruction' returns to the walls and eaves. The places that can be seen through can be returned to the doors and windows which have cracks and holes, while the obstructed places, where there is no seeing through, can be returned to the walls and eaves. **'Conditions' return to distinctions.** Conditions return to the mind which makes distinctions. **'Emptiness' returns to dull emptiness.** The place where there is dull emptiness returns to emptiness at large. **'Darkness' and 'distortion' return to the mist and haze.** Mist and haze are defilements of the atmosphere and can be returned to

the dust. **Bright 'purity' returns to freshness.** The bright purity can be returned to the fresh clear sky. **And nothing that exists in this world goes beyond these kinds.** These eight kinds of transitory characteristics which I have discussed, these four pairs, include every single thing in the world, the many, the few, the far, and the near, everywhere you look. All return somewhere."

R4 He reveals that only the nature of seeing does not return to anything.

Sutra:

"To which of the eight states of perception will the essence of your seeing return? Why do I ask? The answer lies in the fact that if it is returned to brightness, you will not see darkness when there is no light. Although such states of perception as light, darkness, and the like differ from one another, your seeing remains unchanged.

Commentary:

"To which of the eight states of perception will the essence of your seeing return?" What about your essential bright nature which is able to see the eight kinds of transitory characteristics which the Buddha has been discussing? "What should it return to?" the Buddha asks Ananda. **"Why do I ask?** Speak up," he says. Which one of these should the bright nature of your seeing-essence return to? What the Buddha is saying is, "What are you going to return it to, since there's no place to return it? **The answer lies in the fact that if it is returned to brightness, you will not see darkness when there is no light.** If you return your seeing essence to brightness it should not see darkness; but in fact it can see darkness. Therefore, it does not return to light. You can't say that seeing returns to darkness, either, because when it is light, the seeing essence can still see. **Although such states of perception as light, darkness, and the like differ from one another, your seeing remains unchanged.** Although only light and dark have been discussed here, the same with the other six kinds. The various things, the various appearances, the various transitory characteristics all have natures which are distinct from one another. But what

differences would you say exist in seeing? What distinctions? When it sees light, it is seeing; when it sees darkness, it is seeing; when it sees purity, it is seeing; when it sees turbidity, it is seeing; when it sees through things, it is seeing; when it sees obstructions, it is seeing. What distinctions are there?"

Someone says, "There certainly are distinctions in seeing. When you see light, the seeing perceives that it is light. When look at darkness, it knows it is darkness. Isn't this the making of distinctions?"

Not bad. Distinctions are being made when you perceive light and darkness, but not by your seeing; it is your distinction making mind, your mind which seizes upon conditions, that makes them. Don't take that to be the seeing essence. Your knowledge of light and darkness is a matter of your mind. Your seeing sees everything as equally without any distinction. Whenever you see, it is simply seeing. No distinctions are made. The distinctions you make are made by your distinction making mind. Everyone should be particularly attentive to this point. Don't take the distinction making mind to be the bright source of your seeing essence.

O3 Based on the former explanation, he determines clearly and bids him decisively to renounce attachment.

Sutra:

"That which can be returned to other sources is clearly not you; that which can be returned nowhere is none other than you.

Commentary:

This particular section of text explains the doctrine extreme well in a few words. It says, **"That which can be returned to other sources is clearly not you; that which can be returned nowhere is none other than you."** All transitory characteristics can be returned to something else. They are not yours. That which stays with you and does not go anywhere else, that which you cannot return to anyone else whose is it if not yours? If it isn't

yours, you should return it to someone else. You can't. Whoever you give it to does not want it. You give it to the light, but the light does not want it. You give it to the darkness, but the darkness does not want it. You give it to purity, but purity does not want it. You give it to turbidity, but turbidity does not want it. If you could give it away, then you wouldn't be able to see anymore. It is something you cannot give away. "Although you have accomplished the first fruition, you haven't any way, you haven't the spiritual penetrations to give your seeing away to someone else so that you yourself will have no more seeing," the Buddha is telling Ananda. "If it isn't yours, whose it is then? You still don't dare admit that it is yours, you still do not understand. Ananda, you are extremely pitiable."

These few words explain the principle very clearly, and the Chinese text of this Sutra is extremely fine. If you want to study Chinese and have not studied the *Shurangama Sutra*, your study of Chinese is not complete. If you have studied the *Shurangama Sutra*, then when you write essays in Chinese, it is probable that the best scholars of ancient China would not have been able to compare to the excellence of your written Chinese. To understand but a portion of the *Shurangama Sutra* is of inexhaustible use. Those of you who like to study Chinese should not let the opportunity pass to study this superb text. Don't enter the mountain of jewels and return empty handed. Don't be like the bear who goes into a cornfield to eat corn. The bear puts one ear of corn under one arm and then reaches for another ear of corn to put under the other arm. While doing that, he drops the first ear of corn. Then he reaches out to put a third ear of corn under the first arm, and he drops the second ear of corn. All the while he thinks he's loading up a lot of corn, but when he leaves the cornfield and takes a look, he finds out he's only got one. When you enter the mountain of jewels, don't be so overwhelmed by all the gems that as you pick up one you've decided to bring back, you drop the other one you were holding. This explanation of the sutra which you are now hearing is the mountain of jewels. In fact it is even more valuable than the gems found there, more valuable than gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal,

mother of pearl, red pearls, and carnelian. Why? If you understand one sentence of this sutra and then cultivate and apply effort to your work without retreating, if you vigorously progress with courage, then you will become a Buddha. And so its value far transcends the worth of a mountain of jewels. Don't be like "the black bear that picks the ears of corn and loses them as fast as he gets them." The Chinese and the meaning of the sutra text are both excellent. There is nothing about them which is not good. It just remains to be seen if you can accept it. If you can accept it, then no matter what happens, even if I beat you with a board and tell you to get out, you won't be able to leave. That's what will happen if you truly understand, and that is an inconceivable state

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O4 He concludes that it is Ananda who is immersed in his own confusion.

Sutra:

"Therefore I know that your mind is fundamentally wonderful, bright, and pure. You yourself are confused and deluded. You miss what is fundamental, and you are caught in the turning wheel of the six paths, tossing and floating on the stormy sea of birth and death all the time. No wonder the Thus Come One says that you are the most pitiable of creatures."

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha said, "Everything which can be returned is clearly not you, while as for what there is of you that cannot be returned, what is it if it is not you?" **Therefore I know that your mind is fundamentally wonderful, bright, and pure.** But you still don't understand. You can't admit that it is your true mind. So **you yourself are confused and deluded.** There is no place your true mind returns to, but you yourself are confused – you don't understand – and you are deluded – it seems to be right and yet is not. This is what I meant when I said earlier that you lost it. It is something which originally belongs to you, but you don't realize it, so it seems lost. **You are caught in the turning wheel of the six paths.** Your fundamental, true mind escapes you. If one fails to understand one's true mind, then life after life one falls and does

not ascend. Although the true mind is not actually lost, the fall is genuine enough. One falls into the sea of suffering, and one turns this way and that, **tossing and floating on the stormy sea of birth and death all the time.** Being in the sea where one suffers birth and death is just like being tossed about on the surface of the open ocean and being drowned. If birth and death have not been ended, then even if you can handle the water and swim, after being tossed about for long enough you will drown. **No wonder the Thus Come One says that you are the most pitiable of creatures.** The waters of the sea of birth and death are composed of the karmic offenses you create. And in these waters you are tossed back and forth in your human body. That represents the giving rise to delusion and the creation of karma. One creates karma because one does not recognize the true mind. It is said, “The sea of karma is vast.” It has no boundary. Sometimes you are tossed about on its surface, sometimes you sink to the bottom. It is dangerous to be in that water. That is what makes Ananda pitiable.

Seeing Does Not Intermingle

N6 He shows that the seeing does not intermingle.
O1 Ananda doubts the self-nature because of the unclear intermingling of material things and the seeing.

Sutra:

Ananda said, "I recognize that the seeing-nature does not return to anything, but how can I come to know that it is my true nature?"

Commentary:

The Buddha explains it once for Ananda and he does not understand. He explains it twice and he still doesn't understand. He explains it three times, four times, five times, six times and still he does not understand. He still has not recognized his true mind clearly. Now Ananda has another doubt.

Ananda said, "I recognize that the seeing-nature does not return to anything." The word "recognize" reveals Ananda's doubt. In fact, he says he knows that the seeing-nature does not return to anything, as the Buddha has just explained, but in fact he doesn't know what it is ultimately all about. Within his "knowing" that the seeing-nature does not return, a doubt has already arisen, a doubt which resides in and is produced from the so-called knowing. **"But how can I come to know that it is my true nature?"** Now he makes it even clearer. "I know it does not return, but for it not to

return is one thing; how do I know it is my true nature?" If he had no doubts, if he really recognized it, how could he fail to know it is his true nature? He knows the doctrine of being unable to give the seeing-nature to anyone, but he still does not know that the seeing-nature is truly the nature of his mind. After all that the Buddha has explained, Ananda still doesn't have a mind. It is still lost, because he still doesn't recognize it and still doesn't know he has it. I believe that at this point in the sutra, Ananda was at a total loss.

O2 The Thus Come One divides material things and the seeing clearly to reveal the self-nature.

Sutra:

The Buddha told Ananda, "Now I have a question for you. At this point you have not yet attained the purity of no outflows. Blessed by the Buddha's spiritual strength, you are able to see into the first dhyana heavens without any obstruction, just as Aniruddha looks at Jambudvipa with such clarity as he might an amala fruit in the palm of his hand.

Commentary:

The Buddha sees that Ananda is simply too pitiful, because he puts all his effort into literary learning. He asks questions repeatedly, and he doesn't understand after repeated explanations. One complication after another arises. As it is said, "Branches spring from the joints." There aren't any branches, but Ananda wants to produce leaves by making branches spring from the joints. Since Ananda was so pitiful, the Buddha taught him, using the spirit derived from the "great kindness where there are not affinities" and the "great compassion where the substance is the same." You should be most compassionate towards whoever has the least affinities with you. That is what is meant by "the great kindness where there are no affinities." If they have no conditions with you, if they don't get along with you, you should have a compassionate attitude toward them.

I have told you that "one person is all people; all people are just one person." One is all, all is one. That is what is meant by great

compassion where the substance is the same. For example, I consider your difficulties as I would my own. No matter what, I think of a way to alleviate your difficulties. Thus I often see some of my disciples smoking cigarettes, and I hope that they will put a stop to their smoking. If you stop smoking, you can breathe the same air as the Buddha. If you don't stop, then the clouds you breathe in and the fog you breathe out will keep the light of the Buddha from reaching you. The bad habit of smoking is painful suffering, and it is conduct which is not in accord with Dharma. If my disciples who truly want to study Buddhism don't quickly put a stop to it, I will consider it something that I myself have done. Why? I base myself on the Buddha's spirit of "great compassion where the substance is the same." So I hope that no one will have faults. I hope that everyone will be a perfect person. When any one of you is not a completely good person I will feel that I myself am not a good person, because I am just like you. Therefore, since I want to be a good person, I have to think of a way to cause you to be a good person, too. That is what is meant by the "great compassion where the substance is the same." If everyone had this attitude nowadays, there wouldn't be any wars or fighting in the world, no arguments, nothing at all.

The Buddha told Ananda, "Now I have a question for you. At this point you have not yet attained the purity of no outflows. You have not obtained the fourth fruition of Arhatship. You have merely accomplished the first fruition, which does not reach the purity of no outflows. The purity of no outflows is the purest of purities. Nothing is defiled about it. It's easy to talk about, but it's a very difficult state to reach. In that state, there are no outflows from the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind. When your eyes see things and you run outside, that is an outflow. If your ears hear something, and you cannot apply the skill of returning the hearing, but instead run outside and listen, that is an outflow also. Your nose smells scents, your tongue tastes flavors, your body comes in contact with objects, your mind climbs on dharmas: these are all classed as outflows. I've explained before that it is like a glass

bottle with a hole in the bottom. It leaks when water is poured into it. If you people don't cultivate and don't attain the state of no outflows, each of you is like a leaky bottle. You flow constantly from the heavens to the realm of people. From the human realm you flow into the animal realm and from being an animal you flow into a hungry ghost and into the hells. You go with the flow, back and forth, without knowing where you are flowing to. It depends on what kind of karma you have created.

"Blessed by the Buddha's spiritual strength, you are able to see into the first dhyana heavens without any obstruction. Ananda hasn't attained the purity of no outflows, he can borrow the Buddha's strength in order to see the realm of the first dhyana heavens. Ananda had already opened the Buddha's wisdom-eye, but he still couldn't see the first dhyana heavens. When it comes to opening eyes, there are a thousand levels and distinctions. It isn't just a simple matter of opening eyes and being able to see things, as it is with ordinary eyes. Some people can see for three miles, some for seven miles, some for ten, some for thirty, or 300 or 3000. At the very most, one can see 84,000 miles and can contemplate things that occur within 80,000 great kalpas. It's not the case that as soon as your eyes open you can see everything. Only by relying on the strength of the Buddha's spiritual penetrations, was Ananda able to see the first dhyana heavens clearly, in all purity, without any obstruction, **just as Aniruddha looks at Jambudvipa with such clarity.**

The Venerable Aniruddha was foremost in the heavenly eye. His name is Sanskrit and is interpreted to mean "not poor." In this life and life after life, Aniruddha is never poor. This venerable one was a cousin of the Buddha. I mentioned earlier that he had a strange problem. Whenever the Buddha explained sutras, Aniruddha fell asleep. Then the Buddha scolded him:

Hey! Hey! How can you sleep
Like an oyster in the deep?

Sleep, sleep, a thousand years;
The Buddha's name you will not hear.

Oysters stay in their shells and never stick their heads out. When the Buddha scolded him this way, Aniruddha's zeal arose: never again would he sleep! He gazed fixedly and did not sleep day and night. After seven days and seven nights of no sleep, he went blind. Then he went to the Buddha and asked him for help. The Buddha told him not to worry and taught him the Vajra Illuminating Light Samadhi. By cultivating that samadhi, Aniruddha obtained the penetration of the heavenly eye and thereafter he could see Jambudvipa – which means the whole world – **as he might an amala fruit in the palm of his hand**. There are many Jambudvipas of which the one we live in is just one. The amala fruit grows in India, but not in China. I don't know whether it is grown in America. But the point is that the world, as large as it is, is seen as clearly as a piece of fruit held in the hand.

I'll say more about Aniruddha. In a former life he was a farmer who was very poor. Every day he took coarse rice to the fields in his lunch box – or if they didn't have boxes back then, he probably wrapped it in paper and tied it with a string. The rice he ate was rough and of poor quality but very inexpensive. He didn't have the money to buy meat to eat or milk to drink or anything else but the coarse rice. One day Aniruddha met an old bhikshu who lived on the mountain. This old bhikshu was already certified as a Pratyekabuddha. Every seventh day he came down from the mountain into the city to beg for food. With his bowl he begged sequentially at seven houses. If he received food at the seven doors, he would eat. If not, he went back to the mountain and didn't eat.

On that particular day, famine had struck the area and no one had anything to eat. Food was terribly expensive. The Pratyekabuddha came down the mountain and begged at seven houses, and no one had anything to give him. According to his vow, after seven houses he turned around and started back with an empty bowl. On

his way back, he met a farmer on the road, and the farmer probably called out to him, “Old cultivator, did you get any food today?”

The old cultivator said, “No. No food to eat today. Will have to go hungry.”

The farmer thought that over and said, “You didn’t get any food today and that means you have to go hungry for seven more days before you come back down the mountain to beg for food again. That won’t do. If you aren’t afraid that my rice won’t be good to eat, I won’t eat my food, I’ll give it to you.”

The Pratyekabuddha was extremely happy. Why? He’d already gone hungry for seven days and if he’d had to go back that day without anything to eat he would have had to go hungry for two whole weeks. Although he had attained enlightenment, food was still important to him. He too got hungry if he didn’t eat. So he was very grateful. “Thank you very much,” he said, and he transferred merit to the farmer, saying, “Those who practice giving are sure to reap rewards. Those who give seeking happiness will surely later be at ease.” He said, “You are giving food to me now, and I certainly will fulfill your wishes for whatever you may seek. If you want happiness and you make an offering, you will certainly be at peace afterward. You will have that kind of reward.”

Now what do you suppose happened to the farmer who had given the food to the Pratyekabuddha? A strange thing happened. If I tell you, you won’t believe it. I also find it unbelievable. But Shakyamuni Buddha explained it this way in the sutra, and there is no reason not to believe it. You must believe the unbelievable.

What happened?

As soon as he began to hoe the ground, a rabbit hopped out of the ground and in a single leap landed on his shoulder. Once there, it didn’t move. The farmer got scared. He couldn’t figure out why the rabbit had hopped on his back. No matter how hard he tried to shake it off, no matter what he did, the rabbit wouldn’t get down. So he stopped working and went back home as fast as he could so that his wife could have a look and see what it was all about. When he

got home, his wife discovered that the rabbit had turned to gold. Afterward, whenever he took a piece of the golden rabbit to exchange it for money, the piece grew back. Since he was a poor man, he didn't dare take the whole rabbit to sell, so he broke off the four paws to sell, and by the time he got back, the rabbit had grown four more paws. And because of that, his wealth was inexhaustible. Not only was he wealthy from then on in that life, he was wealthy for life after life for ninety-one great kalpas, in the heavens, among people, no matter where he was. So he's called Aniruddha – "never poor."

In Buddhism, it is said of giving that you "relinquish one and obtain ten thousand in return." It says so in the *Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva*. Everyone should believe that doctrine deeply, without the least bit of doubt. Look at the Venerable Aniruddha, who resolved the problem of a Pratyeka-Buddha's hunger by offering him his inferior food, and the Pratyeka-Buddha transferred merit to him so that he obtained the reward of inexhaustible wealth. In China, when a thousand monks are gathered together there is bound to be one Arhat among them. You should think every monk you meet is an Arhat, although it is not that easy, and Arhats are one in a thousand. But then it remains to be seen if you can recognize him. The Venerable Aniruddha made an offering to only one monk, but the monk was a Pratyekabuddha, and so he obtained that kind of good reward.

Now why didn't the Pratyekabuddha receive any offerings when he went to beg for food that day? Once again this must be explained in terms of cause and effect.

Cultivating wisdom and not cultivating blessings,
the Arhat holds an empty bowl.
Cultivating blessings and not cultivating wisdom,
the elephant is bedecked with necklaces.

If you only know how to cultivate wisdom, you say, "I'm going to study the sutras and investigate the Buddhadharma." That's fine,

you can open wisdom. But you also should cultivate giving. You must nourish your blessings and your wisdom. You should seek blessings by making offerings to the Triple Jewel. If you do not plant blessings, then in the future when you're an Arhat who goes out begging, no one will give you any food because you have no blessings.

On the other hand, if you cultivate blessings but do not cultivate wisdom, if you only know how to do good deeds and how to practice giving, then in the future you'll be the elephant bedecked with necklaces. You'll cast off this body and become a big dumb elephant whose body is strung with necklaces and adorned with gems. In former times, women wore such necklaces in their hair. The necklaces were beautiful on the outside and hollow in the middle. One who has blessings but no wisdom is the elephant bedecked with necklaces. Thus when you cultivate the Way, you should cultivate both blessings and wisdom, cultivate outside by doing good deeds and cultivate inside until you obtain the light of wisdom. Then you can obtain a mutual response with the Way.

Sutra:

"Bodhisattvas can see hundreds of thousands of realms. The Thus Come Ones of the ten directions see everything throughout the pure lands as numerous as fine motes of dust. Living beings' sight does not extend beyond a fraction of an inch.

Commentary:

Differences exist when it comes to seeing things. Arhats of the first stage cannot see the first dhyana heavens, while a second-stage Arhat can see the first dhyana heavens but not the second dhyana heavens. Arhats of the third fruition can see the second dhyana heavens but not the third dhyana heavens, unless they are aided by the Buddha's spiritual strength; in that case they can see the fourth dhyana heavens and the heavens of the four stations of emptiness. Bodhisattvas, the great beings, are different; **Bodhisattvas can see hundreds of thousands of realms.** The Bodhisattva of the first

ground can see a hundred worlds, the Bodhisattva of the second ground a thousand worlds, and the Bodhisattvas of the third ground ten thousand worlds. What is seen at each position of enlightenment is different.

The Thus Come Ones of the ten directions see everything throughout the pure lands as numerous as fine motes of dust. Only the Buddhas of the ten directions are able to see throughout the pure adorned lands of all Buddhas; they see them clearly and completely. Thus the *Vajra Sutra* says, "All the various thoughts that occur to all the living beings...are known completely and seen completely by the Thus Come One." When Bodhisattvas possess the understanding of others' thoughts, they know what's on your mind without your saying a word. All the Buddhas can see your thoughts even more clearly.

Living beings' sight does not extend beyond a fraction of an inch. "Living beings" refers to ordinary people. When compared to the vision of a sage or of the Buddhas, you can't see farther than a tenth of an inch or an inch at the most, even if you use all your power of sight. The Buddhas can see all the pure lands as numerous as fine motes of dust, and you can't even see one land. You can't even see all of San Francisco. If you look to the left, you can't see what's on your right. If you look to the right, you can't see what's on your left. If you look ahead, you can't see what is behind you, and if you try to see behind you, you can't see what's in front of you. There are obstructions in the eyes of ordinary people. Although the seeing-nature is neither produced nor extinguished, your physical body has limitations, and that is why you cannot see. The Arhats, the Bodhisattvas, and the Buddhas all have the spiritual penetration of the heavenly eye, and their seeing penetrates without obstruction. But consider what living beings can see: I can see you now, but if I hold a piece of paper up in front of my eyes, it stops me from seeing you. And the piece of paper is not even a tenth of an inch thick. The same would be true if I held up an inch-thick board. That's how it is with ordinary peoples' eyes. If you open the heavenly eye, of course, there is no obstruction and you can see

everything. Compared to the Buddha, we truly are off by a long way.

Sutra:

"Ananda, as you and I now look at the palace where the four heavenly kings reside, and inspect all that moves in the water, on dry land, and in the air, some are dark and some are bright, varying in shape and appearance, yet all are nothing but dust before us – distinctions and obstructions.

Commentary:

The Buddha said further to Ananda, "**Ananda, as you and I –** at present let's just talk about you and me **– now look at the palace where the four heavenly kings reside…"** The Heaven of the Four Kings is the heaven closest to us, located halfway up Mount Sumeru, as explained in the Buddhist sutras. It does not reach the peak of Mount Sumeru. The four great heavenly kings are the eastern heavenly king, the southern heavenly king, the western heavenly king, and the northern heavenly king. The lifespan of beings in the Heaven of the Four Kings is 500 years; after 500 years, they are destined to fall, and the five marks of decay appear, as I explained earlier. A day and a night in the Heaven of the Four Kings is equivalent to fifty years among people. "How is this?" you ask.

I'll give you an example to help you understand. If we feel very happy on a given day, the day passes without our even being aware of it. We feel the day was very short. All of us are like that. Because it is blissful in the heavens, a day and night there is equal to fifty years among people.

Why is fifty years such a long time in the realm of people? In the realm of people there is continual disturbance and affliction, suffering and difficulty, fighting and quarrelling. People are busy from morning to night, and they don't have any idea what they are doing. They are like flies in the air flying north, south, east, and west without knowing what they are doing. You haven't any bliss here. So the time is very long.

Then again, a day and a night among people is equivalent to fifty years in the hells, because the pain and suffering in the hells is so intense, and so the beings there feel the time is extended. From this you should understand that time is neither short nor long. Earlier a disciple asked me, "What is time?" I haven't any time. There is no time. Time is just each person's individual awareness of long and short; that is all. If you are happy every day, fifty years can go by and you won't feel it has been a long time. If one's life is very blissful, if one has no worries, anxieties, anger, or afflictions, one's entire life seems but a short time – the blink of an eye. Ultimately, time is nothing more than a distinction based upon each person's awareness. When I said I haven't any time, it can mean that I don't perceive time, that I'm so busy that I don't perceive time, and that I'm not intent upon perceiving it – these three meanings.

And inspect all that moves in the water, on dry land, and in the air – that is, look at all the creatures, all the animate objects without exception. **Some are dark and some are bright, varying in shape and appearance, yet all are nothing but dust before us – distinctions and obstructions.** They are all dust before your eyes, just obstructions arising from your making distinctions. They are not your own things: they are an external realm of dust, the dust outside. This dust is an "obstruction." It lingers in your brain and in your thoughts, but it does not belong to you.

P2 He tells him to select between them.

Sutra:

"Among them you should distinguish which is self and which is other. I ask you now to select from within your seeing which is the substance of the self and which is the appearance of things.

Commentary:

Because Ananda has still not understood the doctrine of the true mind, he could not make a distinction between the true mind and the false mind. Shakyamuni Buddha has just told him, "Of these

various shapes and appearances, all are nothing but the dust before you. They are all a mundane state before you – distinctions and obstructions. **Among them you should distinguish which is self and which is other.** Ananda, at this point you should make a distinction between that which is your own self-nature and that which is the substance of things." "Self" refers to one's own true mind. "Other" refers to the substance of things. **"I ask you now to select from within your seeing which is the substance of the self and which is the appearance of things."** The "substance of self" refers to the substance of the seeing-nature. Can you tell it from the appearance, the characteristic of things? Take a look yourself and see if you can make the distinction. If you can, you are more intelligent than Ananda. If you can't you aren't as smart as Ananda. Everyone can test his or her own wisdom.

P3 He distinguishes clearly between things and the seeing.
Q1 He makes clear things are not seeing.

Sutra:

"Ananda, if you take a good look at everything everywhere within the range of your vision extending from the palaces of the sun and moon to the seven gold mountain ranges, all that you see is not you, but are things of different features and lights. At closer range you will gradually see clouds floating, birds flying, wind blowing, dust rising, trees, plants, rivers, mountains, grasses, animals, people, all of which are not you, but things.

Commentary:

This doctrine is unspeakably wonderful. You put it into words, and it's not it. You describe it, and that isn't what it is.

What's it like?

It is ineffable. How can you ask what it is like? **Ananda, if you take a good look at everything everywhere within the range of your vision.** Examine it to the ultimate point, to the very source of your seeing. **Extending from the palaces of the sun and moon to**

the seven gold mountain ranges.” The seven golden mountains surround Mount Sumeru. Around the four sides of Mount Sumeru are seven ranges of mountains made of gold, each separated by a sea of fragrant water.

“Where are these mountains?” you say. “I’ll go there and seize some gold and get rich.

I can’t tell you that. If I tell you, and you go steal the gold, and the gold on the golden mountains gets depleted, how can they remain golden?

“Sumeru” is a Sanskrit word which is interpreted to mean “wonderfully high.” Surrounding the four sides of Mount Sumeru are seven layers of golden mountains. Now I’ll tell you something. Even if you haven’t taken the Five Precepts, you are still not permitted to steal my gold mountains. Those gold mountains are mine. If you steal my gold mountains, I’ll recite a mantra and make your head ache so much that you won’t be able to pick up the gold. Don’t try to bully this teacher; he has too much power.

“Look carefully everywhere. Use your heavenly eye to look. Use your Buddha-eye to look, use your wisdom-eye to look. **All that you see is not you, but are things of different features and lights.** Of all these appearances of things, tell me, which one is you? Find one. **At closer range you will gradually see clouds floating**, flying back and forth through the sky, **birds flying** overhead, **wind blowing –** but there is no way to explain this. I don’t have any method to explain these words of the sutra. I’ll just have to stop and ask the Great Master the Sixth Patriarch. The text here says quite clearly that the wind moves, but the *Sixth Patriarch’s Sutra* says ‘It is not the wind which moves; it is not the flag which moves...’ Ultimately, what is it that moves? The *Sixth Patriarch’s Sutra* says, ‘It is your minds, Kind Sirs, which move.’ Here, though, it isn’t known whose mind moves. Is it your mind that moves or is it my mind that moves? Is it someone else’s mind that moves? Whose mind is it that moves? So how am I supposed to explain these words of the sutra? There’s no way to explain them.

One doesn’t know what moves. *Sixth Patriarch’s Sutra* says it isn’t the wind that moves. The sutra here says the wind moves. Which would you say is right? If you say it is the mind that moves, not the wind, then whose mind moves?

“I don’t know,” you say.

If you don’t know, then it isn’t your mind which moves. If your mind hasn’t moved, whose has? Well, I’ll just explain according to the meaning of the sutra text here in it’s most literal aspect. We’ll just say that the wind moves. Your mind hasn’t moved, my mind hasn’t moved. Someone else’s mind hasn’t moved. The wind moves and blows up black smoke and pestilent vapors. The movement of the wind is a display of temper. The heavenly lord gets angry and blows up a great wind which uproots trees and blows down houses.”

Dust rising. How can dust rise? Can it rise by itself? No. The reason the dust rises is that the wind blows. At first the dust is sleeping quite nicely on the ground. The dust is quite comfortable, but the wind comes and says, “Wake up, wake up, and go away.” Then the dust gets up and goes to work.

What work does dust do? “ you wonder.

“It attaches itself to everything in the world., and it makes everything dirty. This is the work dust does. Dust works to make every place unclean. Do you understand?

Trees, plants, rivers, mountains, grasses, animals, people. There are still other things: vegetation and every kind of inanimate object, as well as people and animals, **all of which are not you, but things.**

In the last analysis, are these the appearance of things, or are they your seeing-nature? Answer! Speak up! This passage has the tone of inquiry. I’m asking you, so hurry up and speak: Why aren’t you speaking? That’s how it is expressed here. Is it true they are things and not you, or isn’t it?” This is what is meant by “tapping someone with a stick and making him yell” – arousing someone

from his folly. He is brought up for questioning, just as if it were before a judge during an inquisition. “Are you guilty of stealing? If so, hurry up and admit it. If not, then explain yourself.”

Q2 He makes clear seeing is not things.

Sutra:

“Ananda, all things, near and far, have the nature of things. Although each is distinctly different, they are seen with the same pure essence of seeing. Thus all the categories of things have their individual distinctions, but the seeing-nature has no differences. This essential wonderful brightness is most certainly your seeing-nature.

Commentary:

Through the various presentations of the doctrine, Shakyamuni Buddha has asked Ananda, “You see all these things. Which is your seeing-essence? Find it.” Now he makes the distinction between the essence of seeing and the appearance of things, because Ananda is afraid he won’t be able to tell them apart. Ananda said that things and seeing are mixed together, and he doesn’t know which is which. So the Buddha has initiated this discussion in order to reveal the seeing-nature, and this section of text points straight to it.

“Ananda, all things, near and far, have the nature of things.” All have the appearance of things, the substance and nature of things, **“although each is distinctly different.”** They are all different. Wind is wind, dust is dust. Birds are birds, clouds are clouds. Trees are trees, mountain streams are mountain streams. Grasses are grasses, people and animals are people and animals.

In Chinese the character *ch’a* (差) should be pronounced *ch’ih*. This is an important point of scholarship. Most people who go to school for a few days or a few years don’t know this. To be aware of this kind of distinction in the meaning of characters takes fifteen years of study at the very least.

“How many years have you studied?” someone asks.

“I’ll tell you frankly, I went to school two and a half years. I studied less than you people have.”

“Then why do you understand?”

“I don’t know why I understand. It is enough that when it comes right down to it, I do understand. You shouldn’t ask why. Isn’t that right?”

“They are seen with the same pure essence of seeing.” Your essence of seeing is able to see all these differing things clearly, **“thus all the categories of things have their individual distinctions, but the seeing-nature has no differences.”** The things your seeing encounters are all naturally different from one another, but what distinctions lie within the seeing-nature itself? When you see Mr. Jang, it is the seeing-nature, when you see Mr. Lee, it is still the seeing-nature. The seeing is the same, without any distinction. A cat, a person, no matter what you see, it is seeing. Does the seeing change? Does it make distinctions? Shakyamuni Buddha asks Ananda, “Do you see any distinctions in the seeing?” Ananda hasn’t anything to say. It’s not that he’s dumb; he’s just tongue-tied. If he were dumb, he could still make guttural sounds, but Ananda can’t even do that at this point.

“What is the most essential, most wonderful, most brilliant thing?” The Buddha asks him. “What is it? Speak up!” Ananda still didn’t make a sound. If you think about it, you realize that the Buddha certainly asks Ananda again and again at this point, “What do you say this is?” But Ananda still doesn’t have anything to say. The Buddha is one of great kindness and great compassion and so when he saw he had confounded his disciple to the point he didn’t have anything to say, he said, “I’ll tell you. **This essential wonderful brightness is most certainly your seeing-nature.** Do you know it? Do you understand?” That’s the tone he used.

Q3 He returns to discuss how seeing is not things.

Sutra:

"If seeing were a thing, then you should also be able to see my seeing.

Commentary:

This section of text is expressed wonderfully well. **"If seeing were a thing, then you should also be able to see my seeing.** Ananda, you've said that seeing and the substance of things are mixed together, that they cannot be distinguished clearly. You said the seeing-nature is a thing. If it were, you should be able to see what my seeing is like, and I should be able to see what your seeing is like. Can you? I don't mean can you see what I see, but can you see the seeing that I see with? What is it like?

Is it white, is it black, is it yellow? Is it red? What color it is? At that point Ananda was probably tongue-tied once again. Is it long? Is it short? Is it square? Is it round? Things definitely have a form and an appearance, and if seeing is indistinguishable from things, as you say, then what is seeing's form and appearance? Take a look: mountains have the form of mountains, trees have the form of trees, rivers have the form of rivers. Ultimately, what is your seeing like? Have you seen it?" the Buddha asks Ananda.

Sutra:

"If you say you see my seeing, when we both look at the same thing, then when I am not seeing, why don't you see my not-seeing?

Commentary:

This sutra is truly difficult to explain. As it goes back and forth to bring out the principles, you can get confused just trying to read it, not to mention trying to explain it. "What does that say?" you ask. "What's that all about?"

I'll tell you**. "If you say you see my seeing, when we both look at the same thing, then when I am not seeing, why don't you see**

my not-seeing? When you see something and I don't see it, how is it that you can't see my not seeing it? You should also be able to know that I do not see it. But you don't know. You can't see whether or not my seeing sees it.

This is how this principle goes: you say that seeing is a thing: and when you and I look at the same thing, you say that you see my seeing. Therefore, when I do not see it, you should be able to see my not seeing it. But you can't see my not seeing it; therefore you can't have seen my seeing either. This is an analogy. Doesn't it seem that this is a difficult place to make clear? But if you understand this principle, then the passage is very easy to understand. If you don't understand the principle, then you can explain it many different ways and all you will do is confuse people. You explain, and they say, "In the end, what does this say? What's it all about? It talks about so many 'seeings'. Seeing what seeing?" I really like the *Shurangama Sutra* because the discussions in it are so wonderful. More wonderful than that Wonderfully High Mountain.

Sutra:

"If you do see my not-seeing, it is clearly not the thing that I am not seeing. If you do not see my not-seeing, then it is clearly not a thing, and how can you say it is not you?

Commentary:

This section of text is very easy to explain. If you understand the previous passage you should be able to understand this passage upon hearing it read. No need to explain it; everyone has understood it, so I'll just go on strike.

However, there's someone who says, "I haven't understood yet. Please explain it." So I will. I won't go on strike for the time being.

"If you do see my not-seeing, it is clearly not the thing that I am not seeing. I say that the seeing is not a thing, but you don't believe it yet. Let me make it clearer. If my seeing-nature, which is without distinctions, sees a thing which has certain distinctions, and

if the seeing becomes that thing, as you say, then the seeing-nature should be visible. Therefore you should be able to see my seeing, because if seeing is a thing, it should have characteristics which can be distinguished. However, there is nothing certain about when my eyes look at things. Sometimes my glance comes in contact with something, and then, you say, the seeing is that thing. But sometimes I withdraw my glance from the object and do not see it. If you hold that when I am looking at something my seeing is that thing, and if you say that when you also look at that thing you see my seeing as well, then when I withdraw my glance and no longer look at the thing, why can't you also see the substance of my not-seeing? Why can't you point out where it is? Since you cannot see my not-seeing, then are you really seeing my seeing when we are both looking at something?

"However, say that you insist that you do see where my not-seeing is when I am not seeing something. The substance of my not-seeing is still the seeing-nature. The appearance which I do not see is still a thing. When my seeing has separated from the thing, and you continue to see the substance of my seeing as you say, it should be clear without further explanation that my not-seeing is certainly not the thing not seen.

"If you do not see my not-seeing, then it is clearly not a thing. If you do not see where my not-seeing is, if you don't see the appearance of my not-seeing, then the seeing is not a thing. You had doubts, and you said that seeing and the substance of things are mixed together and cannot be distinguished clearly; but how do you understand? You can't see where my not-seeing is; you don't know whether or not I see. Why? Because my seeing hasn't any form or appearance. It is neither green, yellow, red, white, nor black; neither long, short, square, nor round. It isn't anything, and so you can't see it. If you can't see it, it is obviously then not a thing." When Chinese people scold someone, they say, 'You're nothing." But it is actually a good thing not to be anything. Your seeing-nature is not a thing. So when people scold someone by saying, "You're nothing," a very subtle and wonderful meaning is actually

to be found in it. Most people just consider t an insult and don't understand the meaning. Why not? They don't understand the *Shurangama Sutra*. If they did, they would now that what is not a thing is actually our seeing-nature.

"If you do not see my not-seeing, then it is clearly not a thing." This passage is like the earlier one: "Everything that can be returned is clearly not you." Whatever can be given back to others is not yours, but what there is of you that cannot be returned, whose is it if it is not yours? The same doctrine is being expressed in the present passage. The things that you can see clearly are things, while that which you cannot see clearly is not a thing. You cannot put the seeing which you cannot see in the same category with things. Your seeing and things won't stick together.

You say, "If seeing cannot be put in the same category as things, what is it then? What is it in the same category with?"

You figure it out. Investigate it. People who investigate Ch'an (*dhyana*) investigate a *hua tou*, a meditation topic, and this is a *hua tou* you can investigate. You see that it is not a thing. What would you say it is? Asking "Who is mindful of the Buddha?" Is simply to investigate this question. If you can recognize seeing just at this place – if you can say, "Oh, basically the seeing does not come and does not go. Basically it is not produced and not extinguished. Basically it penetrates perfectly without obstruction." If you understand this doctrine, then you understand your seeing nature.

In the earlier passage the Buddha asks, "Whose is it, if it is not yours?" Here he asks Ananda, **how can you say it is not you?** How can you say it is not yours? How can you say it gets mixed up with things? How can you say there is no clear distinction? Do you understand now? You should understand by now. I have spoken so many principles for you that if you are still unclear, you truly are a muddled worm."

Q4 He returns to discuss how things are not the seeing.

Sutra:

"What is more, if your seeing is a thing, things should also see you when you see things. With substance and nature mixed up together, you and I and everyone in the world are no longer in order.

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha said, "Since you can't see my seeing, since the seeing hasn't any distinctive appearance that can be seen, ultimately is there any seeing? The seeing still exists, but although it exists, it has no visible appearance and no substance, and there is nowhere it can return to. So tell me, how can you fail to acknowledge it as yours? But if you still insist, if you are still attached, you should know that **what is more, if your seeing is a thing, things should also see you when you see things**. If you insist upon saying that your seeing is definitely a thing, then things ought to be able to see your seeing, too. After all, you say your seeing is simply a thing, a thing which can see things. In that case other things must also be able to see, and those things should see your seeing. **With substance and nature mixed up together –** you look at things and things look at you; ultimately who is looking at whom? Speak up! Which looks at which?" Perhaps Ananda might say, "It's just like two people; you see me, and I see you." But when people look at one another, there is mutual awareness; when I look at you, you are aware of it, and when you look at me, I am aware of it. But when things look at you, are the things aware of it? When your seeing, which you say is a thing, looks at other things, are the other things aware of it? This would be the mixing up together of substance and nature. They are in a state of confusion. Things can see you and you can see things, and things can see one another. This is to make a mess of things. It's lumping everything into one category. Then **you and I and everyone in the world are no longer in order**. "Everyone in the world" refers to the sentient world – that is, people – and the material world, that is the

mountains, rivers, the great earth, the houses, porches, verandas, and cottages. All sentient beings, including people, are also called the “proper retribution.” The mountains and rivers, the great earth, the houses, porches, verandas, and cottages are called the “dependent retribution.” Proper retribution is so called because the body that living beings have is the proper retribution for them to be undergoing at any given time. In short, if your seeing were a thing, nothing would be compatible, and everything would be in a state of disorder. This would not be a world; everything in the world would not add up to a world. That is the meaning here.

Sutra:

“Ananda, if, when you see, it is you and not I who see, then the seeing-nature pervades everywhere. Therefore whose is it if it is not yours?

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha again called out to his disciple, “Ananda, do you understand now? I have explained so many doctrines and you are still confused. You aren’t clear yet. **If, when you see, it is you and not I who see –** your seeing which can see is your seeing, not my seeing – **then the seeing-nature pervades everywhere**. You have the seeing-nature, and I have the seeing-nature. Everyone has the seeing-nature. The seeing-nature is all-pervasive, and here is the same amount of seeing-nature in the Buddha as in ordinary living beings.” So it is said, “It is not more in a sage, it is not less in an ordinary person.” At the level of a sage it does not increase by the slightest bit. At the level of an ordinary person it does not decrease by the slightest bit. “You have your seeing, I have mine, everyone has his or her own, and the amount is the same; it is exactly the amount people can use. It cannot be insufficient. Just this very point is where the wonder lies. Since everyone has his or her seeing-essence – since it is all-pervasive in this way – who do you intend to give your seeing to if you don’t want it? If you don’t dare acknowledge your seeing, whose is it, then? If it is not yours, speak up and tell me whose it is: Well?

At that point Ananda was once again speechless. He was once again tongue-tied.

P4 He admonishes him for doubting the self-nature.

Sutra:

"Why do you have doubts about your own true nature and come to me seeking verification, thinking your nature is not true?"

Commentary:

Why do you doubt what is yours? You doubt whether your seeing-nature is yours, yet your seeing-nature is true, actual, and not in the slightest bit false. But you think it is not true, and you turn to me and ask me to demonstrate whether your seeing-nature is yours. With that kind of thinking, the farther you run the farther away you get. You are running away from the Way, way off the track! You are really pitiful."

At this point the Buddha didn't have any way to help Ananda. It's the same as when my disciples are disobedient; I haven't any way to help them either. The Buddha has explained so much principle by now, but Ananda hasn't listened. All he does is run farther away. The more it is explained to him, the less he understands. Having no way to help him, the Buddha waits for Ananda to reply.

Seeing Is Not Obstructed

N7 He shows that the seeing is not obstructed.
O1 Because of the mundane, Ananda wonders about obstruction.

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, given that this seeing-nature is certainly mine and does not belong to anything else, when the Thus Come One and I regard the palace of the Four Heavenly Kings with its supreme store of jewels and stay at the palace of the sun and moon, this seeing completely pervades the lands of the Saha world. Upon returning to the sublime abode, I only see the monastic grounds and in the pure central hall I only see the eaves and corridors.

Commentary:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, given that this seeing-nature is certainly mine and does not belong to anything else – you say for certain that this seeing-nature which can see things is clearly mine and each person's; it is not any other thing. **When the Thus Come One and I regard the palace of the Four Heavenly Kings with its supreme store of jewels –** the World Honored One has used the strength of his spiritual penetrations to take me to see the Four Heavenly Kings." "Supreme" means particularly fine and wonderful, and "store" means that especially valuable gems were used to make the jeweled

palace. **“And stay at the palace of the sun and moon:** We also go to the palace of the sun and moon, **this seeing completely pervades the lands of the Saha world.”** Now the seeing can see very far and wide; it can see everywhere and everything. This proves that the seeing is perfectly pervasive.

At this point some say that the phrase “lands of the Saha world” and the earlier mention of “Jambudvipa” should be switched, but actually it is all the same without switching them. It is not important. All that matters is that you understand the principle at this point. Some people say that the “lands of the Saha world” refers merely to our world, whereas “Jambudvipa” includes lots of worlds. But it is possible to regard the “lands of the Saha world” as meaning many worlds as well. According to my present explanation of the sutra, the two phrases are not switched.

“But, **upon returning to the sublime abode, I only see the monastic grounds and in the pure central hall I only see the eaves and corridors**.” The “Sublime Abode” is the Jeta Grove. The “monastic grounds” in Chinese is *ch’ieh lan* (伽藍) which refers to places where there are Dharma-protecting spirits like Kuan Ti Kung, the one with the long beard and the red face. Ananda is saying, “I see there are Dharma protectors, that Ch’ieh Lan Bodhisattva is here.”

In the phrase “The pure central hall” the word *syin* (心) does not carry the usual meaning of “heart” but means the center of the sublime Abode. “When I go inside,” Ananda says, “all I see are the eaves and corridors in front of me, and nothing more. When I went to the heavens I saw so much more, and now that I’m in this room see so little! Ultimately how is it that my seeing shrinks? Why can’t I see outside?” Ananda still has reason to argue. He still wants to debate with the Buddha and have the Buddha consider his reasoning. What he says next is even more wonderful.

Sutra:

“World Honored One, that is how the seeing is. At first its substance pervaded everywhere throughout the one realm, but

now in the midst of this room it fills one room only. Does the seeing shrink from great to small, or do the walls and eaves press in and cut it off? Now I do not know where the meaning in this lies and hope the Buddha will let fall his vast compassion and proclaim it for me thoroughly."

Commentary:

To take on a disciple like this one is a lot of trouble. A big headache. He asks about the long and the short, the great and the small, the square and the round. He asks why the seeing can see so much and then so little. Is it that the walls press in and cut the seeing off? **"World Honored One, that is how the seeing is.** When I was in the heavens I saw a lot and now that I'm in my room I see so little. **At first its substance pervaded everywhere throughout the one realm.** The substance of this seeing originally pervaded the one realm of empty space. **But now in the midst of this room it fills one room only.** All my seeing can do now is see all of this room. **Does the seeing shrink from great to small?** Is it that the seeing is big and then shrinks, so that it becomes small? It was the size of the world and it shrinks down to the size of the inside of a room. Ultimately how does it shrink? I don't understand this doctrine."

A balloon is big when it is filled with air, but when the air is released it becomes small. It is gone, all gone. Is the seeing like a balloon? Ananda is still making seeing into a thing. He still thinks, "Ah, seeing is a thing. I've got to think of a way to use an analogy in order to debate with the Buddha and win. I'm going to think of a way to invalidate your principle. I'm going to find a way to make the doctrine I speak be the right one, and have you certify me." That is what is going on in Ananda's mind. "You say that everything I say is wrong. I'm definitely going to find something to say that's right and let you have a look at it." One suspects that Ananda's view of self is particularly tenacious just now. "Why do you say that everything I say is wrong?" So then he talks about the seeing shrinking**, "or do the walls and eaves press in and cut it off?**

When I come into the room from outside, the walls and eaves press in and cut off my seeing. How else could it become small after being so wide-reaching before?"

At this point I will tell you a joke. Once in China there was a student who was about to begin his first day of school. His father and mother who were extremely wealthy, invited a distinguished professor to tutor their student. The wealthy man said to the professor, "Don't be too stern. If you can just teach my child one character a day, I'll give you any amount of money you say. In fact, it will be sufficient if you can just teach him to recognize one character."

"That will be easy," said the professor, and he began to teach the student. The student was exceptionally dull, so the professor concentrated on teaching him the character *yi*, "one," which in Chinese is a single horizontal line (一). He wrote it again and again and said, "Look, now, this is the character 'one.' It's called *yi*. Remember it clearly." He instructed him for several days, and eventually the student did not forget. He remembered the character "one." Then one day the master of the house invited the professor for cocktails and dinner. After they finished eating he took his child for a walk in the garden to look at the flowers. The professor felt very self-satisfied and said, "Your child is very intelligent. You said he was extremely dull, but I've taught him to read. He is able to recognize characters."

The master of the house was pleased and asked, "What can he read? Give him a text and let's see."

The professor used his foot and drew a huge character "one" in the ground. Then he asked the child, his student, "What is that?"

The student cocked his head this way and that and peered at it and finally said, "I don't know."

The professor said, "I've been teaching you that every day! It's the character 'one,' isn't it?"

What do you suppose the child said? "The 'one' you taught me wasn't that big."

Ananda is the same as that child. He says, "When I'm outside I see so much, why is it when I come in a room I see so little? It's strange! Do the walls press in and cut off my seeing? **Now I do not know where the meaning in this lies.** Now I don't understand. The more it is explained the more confused I become. What is going on here? Ultimately, how is it that the seeing can be big and little? I haven't shrunk it; how can it get little? If it can shrink, at least there has to be someone shrink it. Perhaps the walls have cut it off. I don't understand this doctrine. Just what is it about? **I hope the Buddha will let fall his vast compassion and proclaim it for me thoroughly.** World Honored One, put forth great compassion and resolve my doubts, and explain the doctrine thoroughly, bit by bit, to make it clear. Instruct me." Ananda is more confused than I am. Now I understand this doctrine, but at the time, Ananda did not understand it.

O2 The Thus Come One shows that the nature is not obstructed.
P1 He makes clear the mundane is not fixed.

Sutra:

The Buddha told Ananda, "All the aspects of everything in the world, such as big and small, inside and outside, are classed as the dust before you. You should not say the seeing stretches and shrinks.

Commentary:

Ananda just said that his seeing was suddenly big and then suddenly little. Did it shrink and stretch? Is that possible? **The Buddha told Ananda, "All the aspects of everything in the world,** including the sentient world and the material world, **such as big and small, inside and outside, are classed as the dust before you.** Perhaps they are big, perhaps they are small, perhaps they are inside, perhaps they are outside: 'all aspects' refers to these characteristics and other such forms and appearances. They are all the

marks of dust before your eyes. **You should not say the seeing stretches and shrinks**."

Sutra:

"Consider the example of a square container in which a square of emptiness is seen. I ask you further: is the square emptiness that is seen in the square container a fixed square shape, or is it not fixed as a square shape?

Commentary:

"Why do I say that you shouldn't say the seeing stretches and shrinks? **Consider the example of a square container.** I'll give you an analogy. There is a square container, a box, **in which a square of emptiness is seen**. Since the box is square, the space inside it is square. **I ask you further:** Now I have another question for you. **Is the square emptiness that is seen in the square container,** is the square space inside the box, **a fixed square shape, or is it not fixed as a square shape?** Does the shape of the emptiness become square in the container? If so, then when the container is removed, the square-shaped emptiness wouldn't be able to be united with the rest of emptiness." So the Buddha asks, "Is the emptiness definitely square, or not? If it is not square, then it is all-pervasive, and it is just like your seeing. Why do you doubt and think that it becomes big or little, that is stretches and shrinks?

Sutra:

"If it is a fixed square shape, when it is switched to a round container the emptiness would not be round. If it is not a fixed shape, then when it is in the square container it should not be a square-shaped emptiness.

Commentary:

"If it is a fixed square shape, when it is switched to a round container the emptiness would not be round. If you say the emptiness is fixed in a square shape, then when it is placed in a round container, the emptiness would not become round. It would still be square-shaped. **If it is not a fixed shape,** if you say that the

space which the emptiness occupies is not fixed, **then when it is in the square container it should not be a square-shaped emptiness.** If you say it does not have a definite square shape, then how could it be that the emptiness becomes square in a square container? What is the principle here?" he asks Ananda. "In the end, would you say the emptiness is square or round? The emptiness is analogous to the seeing. You say the seeing can stretch and shrink, that it can become big or little. Therefore, would you say that the emptiness becomes square or round?" Do you see how the Buddha's questions become more and more impossible to resolve? The more questions Ananda asks, the more confused he becomes.

Sutra:

"You say you do not know where the meaning lies. The nature of the meaning is thus; how can you speak of its location?

Commentary:

"You say you do not know where the meaning lies. Ananda, you say you don't understand this doctrine and don't know where, in the end, the seeing is. **The nature of the meaning is thus.** If you say that seeing and emptiness are the same, would you then say that the emptiness is square or round? It was explained above that if you say emptiness is square, then when it is placed in a round container it would not become round. If you say it is round, when it is placed in a square container it could not be square. In the last analysis, would you say the empty space is round or square? The nature of the meaning of emptiness is like this. The nature of the meaning of the seeing you speak of is the same as in the doctrine of the emptiness. Would you say, then, that it shrinks from large to small or that it is pressed in upon and cut off by the walls? The doctrine has already been explained very clearly. **How can you speak of its location?**" Now you understand the doctrine of emptiness; so how can you ask where the seeing is? The seeing pervades everywhere.

How can you propose theories about where the seeing is located and ask me where the seeing is?

P2 He tells him to forget the mundane and experience pervasiveness.

Sutra:

"Ananda, if you now wished there to be neither squareness nor roundness, you would only need to take the container away. The substance of emptiness has no shape, and so you should not say that you would also have to take the shape away from the emptiness.

Commentary:

"Why? Ananda, if you now wished there to be neither squareness nor roundness – you want the empty space in the container to be neither square nor round and not to conform to the square or round shape of the container. **You would only need to take the container away, because the substance of emptiness has no shape.** The nature of the substance of emptiness is neither square nor not square, nor round. It may be either round or square. **And so you should not say –** Ananda, you should not speak without any basis. Don't make casual statements – you should not say **that you would also have to take the shape away from the emptiness.** To release the emptiness from the temporary squareness it has assumed in conformity to the square container, simply remove the container. You don't need to do anything to the emptiness itself; you don't need to try to change its shape, because basically it has no shape. It conforms to the container, but the emptiness inside is not cut off from the emptiness outside. They are still connected. Ananda, you think the container is an impediment and an obstruction in the same way you think the walls and eaves cut off your seeing. But in fact emptiness is not made square or round by a container, and your seeing is not made big or small by walls and eaves. There could be no such principle. How can you bring it up? You shouldn't speak like that!" Here the Buddha scolds Ananda.

P3 He repeats Ananda's question and reveals his mistake.

Sutra:

"If, as you ask, your seeing shrinks and becomes small when you enter a room, then when you look up at the sun is your seeing pulled out until it reaches the sun's surface? If you build walls and eaves which can press in and cut off your seeing why then is there no evidence of a joining when you drill a small hole? Therefore, that idea is incorrect.

Commentary:

"If, as you ask, your seeing shrinks and becomes small when you enter a room – your idea is that your seeing is something you can open out and fold up and put away again **– then when you look up at the sun is your seeing pulled out until it reaches the sun's surface?** Actually, all you need to do to see the sun is to lift your face and look. But if, as you say, your seeing shrinks when you enter a room, by the same token, can you take hold of your seeing with your hand and pull it out all the way to the sun when you look at it? **If you build walls and eaves which can press in and cut off your seeing:** When you build the house, its walls would be able to press in and cut off your seeing, according to your idea. If your seeing could be severed, you could also connect it up again by drilling a small hole in the wall which you can see through. **Why then is there no evidence of a joining when you drill a small hole?** For example, if there is a tear in a small robe, a patch will be seen after it is sewn up. In the same way, if your seeing is severed from itself by the walls of a house and then reconnected by a hole, why isn't there the slightest evidence of the point of connection? **There certainly should be some sign of it. Therefore, that idea is incorrect.** The doctrine you propose is completely mistaken."

P4 He brings up the cause of the obstruction.

Sutra:

"From beginningless time until now, all living beings have mistaken themselves for things and, having lost the original

mind, are turned around by things. That is why they contemplate bigness and smallness in the midst of all this.

Commentary:

"From beginningless time until now, all living beings have mistaken themselves for things" "All living beings" includes beings born from wombs, from eggs, from moisture, and by transformation, as well as beings having form, beings lacking form, beings that have thought, beings that lack thought, beings that do not have thought entirely, and beings that do not lack thought entirely. All have mistaken themselves and considered themselves to be things. They do not know that things are basically objects within their true mind. **"And, having lost the original mind, are turned around by things.** Their true minds are not fundamentally lost, but they seem lost to them. They do not know that they still have their fundamental minds. Thus the fundamental, everlasting true mind is turned around by things, instead of it turning things around. **That is why they contemplate bigness and smallness in the midst of all this.** You look and say that the seeing is big and then that it is small. That shows that you are completely upside-down. Ananda, you are very pitiful."

P5 He instructs him to turn things around with self mastery.

Sutra:

"If you can turn things around, then you are the same as the Thus Come One.

Commentary:

What is meant here? To be turned around by things means to become attached to whatever outside appearance you encounter, to whatever state you're in, and to get stuck in it. As soon as you 'become attached, you run after things. Your self nature loses its control and pursues external states. Once it runs outside after things then the more it runs, the further away it gets. And the further away it gets, the more it runs. It's like when you lose your way. The longer you are unable to find the way, the more nervous you

become. And the more nervous you become, the farther away you go. The farther away you go, the farther you go down the wrong road. Following after things and being turned around by them involves the same principle."

To "turn things around," now; what does that mean? It means not running after things, but instead having things follow you and run after you.

"Things are inanimate," you say. "How can they run after me? Living things can run after people, and we people can run after things, because we are animate. But how can things run?

Don't be too rigid in your interpretation. Things turn you around, or you turn things around; if you do not run after things, things will be turned around by you: the meaning is that if you understand your true mind, then all external states are merely manifestations of the mind. They are things that are manifested from within your mind. Since they are in your mind, why do you want to run after them? Don't run after them.

Basically, there is no separation between you and things. To turn things around is to understand that everything is made from the mind alone, that everything is a manifestation of the mind alone. To be turned around by situations is to "turn your back on enlightenment and unite with the dust." To oppose the doctrine of enlightenment and form an association with external dust, mundane objects, is to be turned around by things. To turn your back on enlightenment and unite with the dust is to form an association with things. It is as when someone wants to open a business but lacks sufficient funds, and someone else offers to buy shares of stock. When you turn your back on enlightenment and unite with the dust, it is as if you had formed a partnership with the dust. You have joined together with it. That is to be turned around by things. If you turn things around, you "turn your back on the dust and unite with enlightenment." You oppose the things which you see now, you separate yourself from them and unite with enlightenment. It is like turning your hand over. The back of your hand represents turning

your back on enlightenment and uniting with the dust. To turn your hand over is to turn your back on the dust and unite with enlightenment. Just turn it over. That is what is meant by turning things around. If you can turn things around, you are the same as the Thus Come One. Why is the Thus Come One called the Thus Come One? Because he turned his head around; he came to understand. He truly understands, and thus he is called the Thus Come One. If you understand your true mind, then you are the same as the Thus Come One.

Sutra:

"With body and mind perfect and bright, you are an unmoving place of the Way.

Commentary:

"How can the **body and mind** be **perfect and bright**? You have obtained a kind of enlightenment and are the same as the Thus Come One, and so you have light and are especially perfect. **You are an unmoving place of the Way.**" Then wherever you are is a place of the Way. Every place is the dharma-body. "A place of the Way" is a place to cultivate the Way. For example, the place where the Buddha sat beneath the Bodhi Tree, cultivated the Way, and opened enlightenment is called the Bodhi Place of the Way. Now we are in the Buddhist Lecture Hall, and so it is called the Buddhist Lecture Hall Place of the Way. If you can turn things around, then wherever you are is the Dharma-body. Wherever you are is in a state of unmoving suchness. Wherever you go, there is no difficulty. Wherever you go is an unmoving place of the Way. "Unmoving" signifies a kind of samadhi-power. You can turn things around because you have samadhi-power, the power of the Great Shurangama Samadhi.

Sutra:

"The tip of a single fine hair can completely contain the lands of the ten directions."

Commentary:

"The tip of a single fine hair" refers not to a hair on the head but to a fine hair on the body. It can **"can completely contain the lands of the ten directions."** The lands of the ten directions are all contained on the tip of a single strand of fine hair. Such a small place can contain the lands of the ten directions. How vast would you say those lands are?

"I don't believe this principle," you say. "One of my fine hairs couldn't even hold a single person, let alone the lands of the ten directions. Not to mention a person, it couldn't support even a very small particle of something. How could it possibly contain all the lands of the ten directions?"

That is just how wonderful the Buddhadharma is. Your lack of understanding of the Buddhadharma lies just here. Although the tip of a fine hair is small, the small can contain the great. In the small can appear the state of the lands of the ten directions. If you have opened the Buddha-eye, you can see this state very clearly. You have that kind of spiritual penetration, that kind of wonderful function. "In the midst of the small, the great appears." The place is small, but it can manifest a large state. How? Because you are the same as the Thus Come One. The Thus Come One can manifest the great in the midst of the small. He can manifest limitless unbounded lands. That is how wonderful the Dharma is.

Seeing Is Not Separate

N8 He shows that the seeing is not separate.
O1 Ananda doubts that his body and seeing each have a substance.

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, if this seeing-essence is indeed my wonderful nature, my wonderful nature is now in front of me. If the seeing is truly me, what, then, are my present body and mind? Yet it is my body and mind which make distinctions whereas the seeing does not make distinctions and does not discern my body.

Commentary:

The Buddha expounded this kind of wonderful principle, wonderful Dharma, wonderful samadhi, and Ananda still did not understand. Instead, he kept talking. **Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, if this seeing-essence is indeed my wonderful nature, my wonderful nature is now in front of me.** The seeing-essence which can see is certainly my wonderful nature, and it is before me." Now he says it is in front of him! **"If the seeing is truly me, what, then, are my present body and mind?** If my seeing sees me, what then are my present body and mind called? What things are they? **Yet it is my body and mind which make distinctions whereas the seeing does not make distinctions and does not discern my body.** My body and mind make distinc-

tions, but my seeing, which does not make distinctions cannot discern my body."

Sutra:

"If it is really my mind which causes me to see now, then the seeing-nature is actually me, and the body is not me.

Commentary:

"If it is really my mind which causes me to see now, then the seeing-nature is actually me, and the body is not me. If you say the seeing-nature is truly the mind, it can cause me to see and the seeing-nature which can see is then truly me. I see, and since I see, I know it is truly mine. But I can't see my seeing, so in fact, I don't know if it is mine or not. If the seeing is me, then my body is not me. It becomes a thing. It becomes something else." When Ananda talks, he truly causes people not to understand. It is fortunate that the Buddha has great knowledge and great wisdom which enables him to answer as he does.

Sutra:

"How is this different from the question the Thus Come One asked about things being able to see me? I only hope the Buddha will let fall his great compassion and explain for those who have not yet awakened."

Commentary:

"How is this different from the question the Thus Come One asked about things being able to see me? How is this different from what you, World Honored One, asked me earlier? You said, 'If seeing is a thing, things should be able to see me.' Now the seeing is in front of me, and it is the same as the doctrine the Buddha spoke earlier**. I only hope the Buddha will let fall his great compassion and explain for those who have not yet awakened.** World Honored One, I hope you will bring forth the mind of great compassion and explain to me the doctrines which I have not yet understood."

O2 The Thus Come One explains that the myriad dharmas are a single substance.
P1 He scolds him for his false proposal.

Sutra:

The Buddha told Ananda, "What you have now said – that the seeing is in front of you – is actually not the case.

Commentary:

You could say that Ananda is confused within confusion. Actually, though, Ananda is certainly not confused. But he manifests the appearance of being confused in order to cause living beings not to be confused. He is acting as a model for living beings. He enables them to see that Ananda, confused to such an extent, is able to become enlightened. Now as we look into the meaning of the sutra, some people may be more intelligent than Ananda, and they will be even less confused. That is the meaning of it. Earlier in the sutra, Ananda said that his seeing was in front of him and had no connection with his body. Then he asked the Buddha to instruct him about this doctrine. **The Buddha told Ananda –** since Ananda asked, Shakyamuni Buddha is now going to tell him. **"What you have now said – that the seeing is in front of you – is actually not the case.** You say that the seeing which can see is in front of you, but your assertion is totally mistaken, completely incorrect." The Buddha straightened him out immediately.

P2 He dismisses it as the seeing.
Q1 The Thus Come One's question.

Sutra:

"If it were actually in front of you, it would be something you would actually see, and then the seeing-essence would have a location. It wouldn't be that there is no evidence of it.

Commentary:

"If it were actually in front of you – if it really were the case that the seeing is in front of you, **it would be something you would actually see**. You should see the seeing. But you haven't seen the seeing, so what you have said is wrong. If you actually could see it,

then the seeing-essence would have a location. Then the seeing-essence would have a location. To be in front of you would be to have a location. **It wouldn't be that there is no evidence of it.** If the seeing is in front of you, what indication is there of it that makes you think it is there?"

Sutra:

"Now as you sit in the Jeta Grove you look about everywhere at the grove, the ponds, the halls, as far as the sun and moon, with the Ganges River before you. Now, before my lion's seat, point out these various appearances: what is dark is the groves, what is bright is the sun, what is obstructing is the walls, what is clear is emptiness, and so on from the grasses and trees to the finest particle of hair. Their sizes vary, and since they all have appearances, none cannot be located.

Commentary:

This section of text is spoken to break up Ananda's attachment. **"Now as you sit in the Jeta Grove you look about everywhere at the grove, the ponds, the halls, as far as the sun and moon, with the Ganges River before you.** Sitting in Prince War-Victor's grove, among small pools of water here in the Sublime Abode, looking upward to the palaces of the sun and moon, and facing the Ganges River, **now, before my lion's seat, point out these various appearances**. With your hand, point to these various forms, these various shapes and appearances. **What is dark is the groves –** the places in darkness are the groves of trees; **what is bright is the sun –** the places where the sun is shining; **what is obstructing is the walls**, which impede and do not allow things to go through; **what is clear is emptiness**, which goes through and offers no obstructions; **and so on from the grasses and trees to the finest particle of hair**. I have been speaking generally; 'and so on' includes everything in between that has not been mentioned, from blades of grass to the finest particle of hair. Didn't I just say,

On the tip of a hair
the lands of the Buddha appear.

Sitting in a fine mote of dust
one turns the great Dharma-Wheel

A particle, that is, a fine mote of dust, and a strand of fine hair represent the very smallest possible things. **Their sizes vary, and since they all have appearances, none cannot be located.** Big or small, all these things have a form and appearance, and everything which has form and appearance can be pointed out. Now which among them would you say your seeing is? Which thing is your seeing?

The seeing has been discussed again and again, but Ananda still does not understand, and so the seeing is still being explained. These are the Ten Manifestations of Seeing, ten kinds of distinctions made to point out that the seeing is neither produced nor extinguished, and that it does not come or go. Actually, Ananda had perhaps already understood, but on behalf of living beings he has requested Dharma, since many living beings still do not understand. As he investigated the seeing-nature with Shakyamuni Buddha, it was as if they were reciting a play line by line, each in harmony with the other.

Sutra:

"If it is certain that your seeing is in front of you, then with your hand you should with certainty point out what the seeing is. Ananda, if emptiness is the seeing, then how can it remain empty since it has already become your seeing? If a thing is the seeing, how can it be external to you as an object, since it has already become your seeing?

Commentary:

"If it is certain that your seeing is in front of you: if you definitely want to say that your seeing is a thing that appears before you, then certainly it is like an object which has been placed there. **Then with your hand you should with certainty point out what the seeing is.** If it is in front of you, you should be able to point right to it. Well? Hurry up and speak.

But Ananda did not make a sound. Why? He wasn't in control. he wanted to bring up another point to discuss, but he hadn't thought of one yet, so he was still tongue-tied.

"Ananda, if emptiness is the seeing, then how can it remain empty since it has already become your seeing? You ought to know this! Don't you understand yet? At this point the Buddha gets nervous. Basically the Buddha hasn't any fire but by now it seems likely that his fire rose up. If emptiness is the seeing, it should not have the name 'emptiness.' Where has emptiness itself gone off to? Where there is seeing, there should not be emptiness. If your seeing is located there, emptiness should not be there. So which is the emptiness – emptiness or seeing?

"If a thing is the seeing, how can it be external to you as an object, since it has already become your seeing? Perhaps you say, 'It's not that my seeing is the emptiness. It's rather that all the things I see before me are my seeing.' Well, then, what are things? If things are your seeing, they should not be called things. If they aren't things, what are? Speak up!" The Buddha confronts him directly and presses him to answer.

Sutra:

"You can cut through and peel away the myriad appearances to the finest degree in order to distinguish and bring forth the essential brightness and pure wonder of the source of seeing, pointing it out and showing it to me from among all these things, so that it is perfectly clear beyond any doubt."

Commentary:

"You can cut through and peel away the myriad appearances to the finest degree. Make special use of your brain to think it over and investigate clearly and in minute detail, so that you don't speak casually and confusedly again. Don't just answer me without a moment's hesitation. Now you should exhaust your brain-power to investigate this question. Cut through the myriad appearances – distinguish among the appearances of the ten

thousand things as if you were cutting through them and dissecting them with a knife, and peel them away, as if you were using a knife to take the skin off bit by bit.

“To distinguish and bring forth the essential brightness and pure wonder of the source of seeing. Clearly distinguish the essential brightness which everyone can see and understand, the most pure and most wonderful source of the seeing that can see. **Pointing it out and showing it to me from among all these things.** You tell me; you indicate clearly which is your seeing and which are things, **so that it is perfectly clear beyond any doubt.** Can you make this distinction? Try it out.”

Q2 Ananda answers.
Q3 The Buddha seals and certifies him.

Sutra:

Ananda said, “From where I am now in this many-storied lecture hall, as far as the distant Ganges River and the sun and moon overhead, all that I might raise my hand to point to, all that I indulge my eyes in seeing, are all things; they are not the seeing. World Honored One, it is as the Buddha has said. Not merely myself, who am a shravaka of the first stage who still has outflows, but even Bodhisattvas cannot break open and reveal, among the myriad appearances which are before them, an essence of seeing which has a special self-nature apart from all things.”

The Buddha said, “So it is, so it is.”

Commentary:

Ananda said, in answer to the Buddha’s instruction**, “From where I am now in this many-storied lecture hall –** the lecture hall had two stories **– as far as the distant Ganges River –** when I look into the distance I see the Ganges River **– and the sun and moon overhead, all that I might raise my hand to point to, all that I indulge my eyes in seeing, are all things; they are not the seeing.”** When the eyes are lowered or closed they are “stored

away," but to open them up wide is to indulge them. "Anything that I see when I open them and indulge them, anything that can be pointed to, is a thing; it is not the seeing-essence. Nothing can be shown to be the seeing."

"World Honored One, it is as the Buddha has said. It is like the doctrine which the Buddha explained before, namely, that **not merely myself, who am a shravaka of the first stage who still has outflows, but even Bodhisattvas cannot break open and reveal, among the myriad appearances which are before them, an essence of seeing which has a special self-nature apart from all things."** I am a shravaka who has just begun to study, a Sound-Hearer who has attained only, the first fruition and whose power of spiritual penetrations is quite small. Therefore I still have outflows, since one becomes a being without outflows only upon attaining the fourth fruition of Arhatship. But the Buddha said that not even at the level of a Bodhisattva can one break open the myriad appearances before one, as if one were to cut them open with a knife, and find the seeing-essence among them. 'For your seeing-nature is not a thing, and you cannot locate it as a thing among the myriad things.'"

The Buddha said, "So it is, so it is. This time you have spoken correctly. That is the way it is." He said it twice: "Correct; correct." The Buddha emphasizes the point by repeating himself. This shows that he very much agrees with Ananda's opinion. He said, "Now your view is not mistaken. It is not like the mistakes you made before."

P3 He reiterates that what is lost is not the seeing.
Q1 The Thus Come One asks a question.

Sutra:

The Buddha said further to Ananda, "It is as you have said. There is no seeing-essence to be found existing separately among all the things. Therefore, all the things you point to are things, and none is the seeing.

Commentary:

The Buddha will ask another question in order to reveal the seeing-essence. **The Buddha said further to Ananda, "It is as you have said. There is no seeing-essence to be found existing separately among all the things.** There is no special thing that is the seeing. **Therefore, all the things you point to are things, and none is the seeing.** Among all the things, everything you point to is a thing. None of these things is the seeing-essence.

Sutra:

"Now I will tell you: you and the Thus Come One sit in the Jeta Grove and look again at the groves and gardens, as far as the sun and moon, and at all the various different appearances, and it is certain that the seeing-essence is not among whatever you point to. You can go ahead and reveal what, among these things, is not your seeing."

Commentary:

Now I will speak another doctrine for you. **Now I will tell you: you and the Thus Come One sit in the Jeta Grove –** Ananda and the Buddha and everyone else are sitting in the Jeta Grove **– "and look again at the groves and gardens, as far as the sun and moon –** the flower gardens, everything that can be seen from here to the sun and moon in the sky above **– at all the various different appearances, and it is certain that the seeing-essence is not among whatever you point to. You can go ahead and reveal what, among these things, is not your seeing.** Which among all these things is not your seeing?"

"The Buddha's joking," you say. "He said before that things were not the seeing, and now he asks Ananda to tell him which things are not the seeing." That's how the *Shurangama Sutra* is: if you don't understand this place in the text clearly, you will become confused. "It said before that the things were not the seeing, and now it says they are the seeing." you'll say. "Now it asks which aren't the seeing, but before it said none of them was the seeing."

Q2 Ananda answers.

Sutra:

Ananda said, "I see clearly all over this Jeta Grove, and I do not know what in the midst of it is not my seeing.

Commentary:

Ananda knew earlier that they were not his seeing, but now that the Buddha has asked him which are not his seeing, he's confused again. He doesn't understand the question again. **Ananda said, "I see clearly all over this Jeta Grove.** I can see everywhere all around this grove of trees of Prince War-Victor, **and I do not know what in the midst of it is not my seeing**. Which isn't my seeing? Now I don't know." As soon as the Buddha asked that last question, Ananda got confused again. Thus the *Shurangama Sutra* is just confusion upon confusion until the very end, when it is all made clear. So don't be afraid of confusion and say, "I don't understand, I don't know what is going on now." The Buddha is just turning the principle back and forth, explaining it over and over. It is a thorough investigation of the principle. He brings up one doctrine and says, "Do you think that's right?" He explains that it isn't right, and he brings up another doctrine and says, "Do you think that's wrong?" And he shows how that, too, is not correct. It is simply to reveal the principle.

"What is not the seeing?" The Buddha asks. "Speak up and tell me."

Ananda says, "I don't know which isn't the seeing. Now I'm confused again."

Sutra:

"Why? If trees are not the seeing, why do I see trees? If trees are the seeing, then what becomes of trees? The same is true of everything up to and including emptiness: if emptiness is not the seeing, why do I see emptiness? If emptiness is the seeing, then what becomes of emptiness?

Commentary:

"Why? If trees are not the seeing, why do I see trees?" Ananda says that if the trees are not the seeing, then he wouldn't see the trees. So he can't say that the trees are not the seeing. **"If trees are the seeing, then what becomes of trees?** If I were to say the trees are the seeing, then where would the trees have gone off to? Originally the trees were simply trees, but now he is saying that they are the seeing, and so now he can't find a name for them. As for myself, I would just say they were wood. **"The same is true of everything up to and including emptiness."** Trees are by nature things with form. But it is not only true of things which have an appearance, it is the same with emptiness, and of all the things in between, which he doesn't mention by name because there would be no time to explain them all. It is the same with my explanation of the sutra. To lecture the entire sutra in three months means that many doctrines within it must go unspoken.

"If emptiness is not the seeing, why do I see emptiness? My seeing of emptiness is the seeing. If I say that emptiness is not the seeing, then why do I see emptiness**? If emptiness is the seeing, then what becomes of emptiness?** If it is the seeing, how can it also be called emptiness? So I don't know how this doctrine is to be explained." Now Ananda has a mouth but finds it difficult to speak.

Sutra:

"As I consider it again and reveal the subtlest aspects of the myriad appearances, none is not my seeing."

Commentary:

"As I consider it again." Ananda has once again taken hold of his conscious mind that makes distinctions. Earlier, he constantly trotted out the sixth mind-consciousness to debate with the Buddha and now he has brought it out again. So he says, "I am thinking again, and I **reveal the subtlest aspects of the myriad appearances**. I think about them in minute detail. I think it over and over, backwards and forwards, up and down, and I think I have reached it. In the subtlest aspects of the myriad appearances, none

is not my seeing. All alike are the seeing. None is not the seeing. Every Single thing is the seeing. Which is to say, I see them after all.

Q3 The Buddha seals and certifies him.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "So it is, so it is."

Commentary:

The Buddha certified him again. "Ah, what you say is correct. That is the way it is. You understand what I mean." The Buddha was happy and said, **"So it is, so it is."**

What do all of you say? Ultimately, what is the seeing and what are the things? Are the things the seeing or not?

P4 The members of the great assembly are startled, prostrate themselves seeking consolation.

Sutra:

Then all in the great assembly who had not reached the stage beyond study were stunned upon hearing these words of the Buddha, and could not perceive where the meaning began or ended. They were agitated and taken aback at the same time, having lost what they had adhered to.

Commentary:

Everyone heard this dialogue, and heard that the seeing both is a thing and is not a thing. Then which is it? All the opinions which everyone had held before no longer held up.

"Then all in the great assembly who had not reached the stage beyond study." Bodhisattvahood is called the "stage beyond study." The fourth fruition of Arhatship is also called the stage beyond study. There were many in the Shurangama assembly who had not yet been certified as having attained the fourth fruition of Arhatship. They were at the first fruition, the second fruition, or the third fruition – the positions with something left to study. **"They**

were stunned upon hearing these words of the Buddha.” When the Buddha said it was the seeing and then said it was not the seeing, saying it was a thing and then saying it was not a thing, investigating back and forth like that, they didn't understand; they were stunned. They had eyes and yet could not see. They had ears and yet could not hear. They couldn't perceive anything at all. I'll give you an example. When people are confused by a ghost, they don't know anything at all. They forget everything that went on before. However, this is only an example; don't think that the people in the Shurangama assembly were actually confused by a ghost. They weren't. I just said they were like people who had been confused by a ghost, and now I say they were not like people who have been confused by a ghost. That's like saying seeing and things are one and then saying that they are not one. It's the same principle.

They were stunned and **could not perceive where the meaning began or ended**. They did not know where this doctrine began or what it would be like in the end result. “What is being talked about?” they wondered. They didn't understand. **They were agitated and taken aback at the same time, having lost what they had adhered to.** Everyone was afraid. Their hearts pounded as if a rabbit was jumping around inside. They couldn't believe what they'd heard. All the opinions they had held before had been rendered invalid and destroyed. It was as if they had lost all the treasures which they previously possessed, and so they were trying to figure out where to go to find them. Should they notify the authorities? Should they call the police? But in those days there probably weren't any policemen. The things they had lost, moreover, were invisible. So even if they called the police, the police would be helpless. They wouldn't be able to find them.

Sutra:

The Thus Come One, knowing they were anxious and uneasy in spirit, let pity rise in his heart as he consoled Ananda and everyone in the great assembly. “Good people, what the

unsurpassed Dharma King says is true and real. He speaks things as they are. He does not deceive. He does not lie. He is not Maskari Goshaliputra with his four kinds of non-dying theories that are deceptive and confusing. You should consider this attentively. It is no disgrace to pity or to implore."

Commentary:

When the Buddha saw that the great assembly was agitated, he gave rise to compassion in his heart and took pity on everyone. "Ah, you people are truly pitiable." **The Thus Come One, knowing they were anxious and uneasy in spirit, let pity rise in his heart as he consoled Ananda and everyone in the great assembly.** He knew that their spirits were not at peace so he compassionately gave a little of the gift of fearlessness. He said, "None of you should be frightened. I will now speak to you. **Good people.**" The Buddha addressed everyone in the great assembly as "good children." "Good children, listen carefully. Don't be rambunctious. Now I will tell you what **the unsurpassed Dharma King says – is true and real**. What he says is really so. You should have no doubts about that. There is a decided principle in what I said earlier, that the seeing is a thing and is not a thing. I am truly and really telling you something reliable. I am not cheating you. **He speaks things as they are.** What I say is in accord with principle. I rely on the principle in expressing my doctrines. It is impossible for it not to be in accord with principle. **He does not deceive. He does not lie.** He does not say deceptive or untrue things. **He is not Maskari Goshaliputra.**" "Maskari" is a Sanskrit name which is interpreted to mean "Not Seeing the Way." His mother's name was Goshali; "putra" means "Son of." Maskari Goshaliputra is one of the six masters of external paths. He was called "Not Seeing the Way" because he did not understand the Way. He could not see it and could not walk it. All he did was traverse a confused way. He ran around with his eyes closed and eventually he walked right into the sea, where he drowned. It was because he did not see the Way. That is what I think, several thousand years later. It is for certain the salt water was very uncomfortable. It was not as comfortable as

drinking wine or drinking pure water. Once he had drunk the salt water of the sea, it is likely that no doctor could cure him.

"With his four kinds of non-dying theories that are deceptive and confusing." What did he say? "It is both changeable and constant." Things both change and are permanent. "It is both defiled and pure." It is both clean and unclean. "It is both produced and extinguished." It gets born and dies. "It both increases and decreases." These are his four theories. Originally the Buddha said, "It is neither produced nor extinguished," but Maskari said, "it is both produced and extinguished." His theory is off by just that much.

The Buddha said, "Everything is unmoving. Unmoving, it accords with conditions; it accords with conditions, but does not move." But Maskari said, "It neither changes nor is constant."

Maskari's theories are just talking out of both sides of his mouth. He says one thing has principle and also says its opposite has principle. And right down the line he is in direct opposition to the doctrine the Buddha explained. So the Buddha refers to his four kinds of non-dying as "deceptive and confusing theories." "Deceptive means that they go to the other extreme and in so doing confuse people. But his theories are not correct. They are wrong. To reassure the assembly, the Buddha says that his doctrines are not like the confused and deceptive theories propounded by Maskari.

"You should consider this attentively. You should think about this in detail. **It is no disgrace to pity or to implore.** Don't worry. Don't be afraid. Don't be sad." "Pity" refers to what the Buddha expressed. "I am very sympathetic toward you." "Implore" refers to what those in the great assembly were doing when they looked up to the Buddha's compassionate countenance as he consoled them.

P5 Manjushri asks a question.
Q1 He brings up a doubt and formulates a question.

Sutra:

Then Manjushri, son of the Dharma King, took pity on the four assemblies, rose from his seat in the midst of the great assembly, bowed at the Buddha's feet, placed his palms together respectfully, and said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, the great assembly has not awakened to the principle of the Thus Come One's two-fold disclosure of the essence of seeing as being both form and emptiness and as being neither of them.

Commentary:

Then Manjushri, son of the Dharma King – Manjushri, the Great Wise Bodhisattva, had already understood, but he looked at those in the assembly who had something left to learn, the first-stage, second-stage, and third-stage Arhats, and saw that they were extremely pitiful. So he brought up a question.

"Manjushri" is a Sanskrit name that means "Wonderful Virtue." He is also called "Wonderfully Auspicious." The Buddha is the Dharma King, and a Bodhisattva is a son of the Dharma King. Manjushri was an Elder among the sons of the Dharma King; he was the leader among the Bodhisattvas. He **took pity on the four assemblies –** the bhikshus, bhikshunis, upasakas, and upasikas – **rose from his seat in the midst of the great assembly**, and **bowed at the Buddha's feet**. He stood up and then bowed down to the Buddha and held the Buddha's feet with his two hands. This is a gesture of utmost respect. People's feet are most unclean, and so to use one's hands to hold the Buddha's feet indicates, "I am beneath your feet." So when you bow to the Buddha, you turn your palms up, and in this position you should contemplate that your two hands are under the Buddha's feet. This represents the purity of the body-karma, because while showing respect in this way, you are not committing any offenses with your body. He **placed his palms together respectfully**. This represents the purity of the mind-

karma. In your mind you also give rise to thoughts of true respect. Placing your palms together, with the ten fingers placed carefully side by side, represents single-minded respect. It means that you "turn to one" and give undivided attention to revering the Buddha. Placing the palms together is also called "uniting the ten to become one."

And said to the Buddha: this represents the purity of mouth-karma. Body, mouth, and mind all pay respect. The karma of the body, the karma of the mouth, and the karma of the mind are all pure. This is the purity of the three karmas. Why do people commit karmic offenses? Offenses are most often committed by the mouth. It is said,

Calamities come forth from the mouth;
Sickness enters by way of the mouth.

When catastrophes befall us, when adverse circumstances arise, they are usually brought on by the mouth. You say someone is wrong, and that person comes and treats you rudely. Isn't that a disaster brought about by the mouth? "Sickness enters by way of the mouth." When we eat things, we should be careful what we take in. If you are not careful about what you eat, you can get sick. The sickness referred to here does not just mean a temporary illness. It means that, over a long period of time, what you eat as well as other conditions can cause your breath and blood to be out of balance. When that happens, sickness arises.

"World Honored One, the great assembly has not awakened." He says that no one understood. But did Manjushri Bodhisattva understand?

He understood. But he still wanted to ask on behalf of those who had the opportunity to be present in the great assembly. If he had not asked, no one else would have known how to phrase the question. The Buddha could have explained it, but if no one knew how to ask, there would have been no way to take advantage of the Buddha's knowledge.

We know that Manjushri understood because the text says he "took pity on the four assemblies." But even if it weren't for that phrase, we would know that he understood because he has the greatest wisdom and is referred to as "the Greatly Wise Manjushri Bodhisattva." His question was asked on behalf of those who have not awakened **to the principle of the Thus Come One's two-fold disclosure of the essence of seeing as being both form and emptiness and as being neither of them**. This refers to the doctrine involving the seeing-essence, things, and emptiness. Ultimately, is the seeing a thing or is it emptiness? Nobody else knew how to ask about this doctrine, so Manjushri Bodhisattva decided to ask about it.

P6 The Thus Come One's compassionate instruction.
Q1 First he explains it is not because of "is" or "is not".
R1 He makes clear the one truth neither "is" nor "is not".

Sutra:

"World Honored One, if the causal form, emptiness and other phenomena mentioned above were the seeing, there should be an indication of its distance; and if they were not the seeing, there should be nothing visible to be seen. Now we do not know what is meant, and this is why we are alarmed and concerned.

Commentary:

Do you see how Manjushri phrases things completely differently from Ananda? Ananda is not clear about what is going on. But when Manjushri Bodhisattva speaks, his reasoning is quite complete. He says, **"World Honored One, if these conditions before us – the appearance of form and emptiness alike – were the seeing, one would be able to point to it."** "These conditions before us" refers to the dust before one, the causes and conditions discussed above. "Form" refers to things, "emptiness" to space. "Alike" refers to both these characteristics, and "appearance" means there is not necessarily such a thing, but they are used by way of analogy. Manjushri says that if form and emptiness are the

seeing, there would be some representation of it, that one could point to the seeing. **If they were not the seeing, then one would not see anything.** The World Honored One first said that the seeing was not a thing. Afterward, he said that seeing is a thing – that is, he asked what things are not the seeing. Nobody knew what he meant. **Now we do not know what is meant.** Just what is happening here? In the end, is there seeing or isn't there? Manjushri Bodhisattva says "we" because he doesn't have a self. He says that everyone does not understand. His question is a lot clearer than any asked by Ananda. You see how simply he states it, yet the meaning is very wonderful. **"This is why we are alarmed and concern.** This is something we never paid much attention to before and now that we have taken notice of it, the doctrine so wonderful that we are not sure what it is ultimately all about. I look at this lamp, for example: is the seeing the lamp or is the lamp the seeing? This doctrine hasn't been explained clearly. If you say the lamp is not the seeing, then I don't see the lamp. You may say the lamp is the seeing, but the lamp itself cannot see. So you say it is the seeing and yet it is not the seeing."

Q2 He picks up on the past and seeks instruction.

Sutra:

"It is not that our good roots from former lives are deficient. We only hope the Thus Come One will have the great compassion to reveal exactly what all the things are and what the seeing-essence is. Is it that there is no question of 'is' or 'is not' in all of this?"

Commentary:

It is not that our good roots from former lives are deficient. The reason for our alarm and concern is not that our good roots from our last lives or from other previous lives are deficient. It wasn't that the members of the assembly had few good roots. It was that they didn't understand the doctrine at all. Sometimes people whose good roots are slight will become very afraid when they cultivate the Way. What should you do if this happens? Do more

good deeds, to nourish your good roots. When your good roots are nourished and grow deeper, then you will have samadhi-power. If your good roots are insufficient, your samadhi-power will be insufficient too. So we all should nourish our good roots.

"We only hope the Thus Come One will have the great compassion to reveal exactly what all the things are and what the seeing-essence is. Is it that there is no question of 'is' or 'is not' in all of this?" In the end, is it that there is no "is" and no "is not" in the midst of things, emptiness, and the seeing-essence? Manjushri Bodhisattva is really clear about this doctrine, and so he makes this deduction.

P6 The Thus Come One's compassionate instruction.
Q1 First he explains it is not because of "is" or "is not".
R1 He makes clear that the one truth is not "is" or "is not".

Sutra:

The Buddha told Manjushri and the great assembly, "To the Thus Come Ones and the great Bodhisattvas of the ten directions, who dwell in this samadhi, seeing and the conditions of seeing, as well as the characteristics of thought, are like flowers in space – fundamentally non-existent.

Commentary:

The Buddha told Manjushri and the great assembly, "To the Thus Come Ones and the great Bodhisattvas of the ten directions, who dwell in this samadhi – in the Great Shurangama Samadhi **– seeing and the conditions of seeing –** the causes and conditions which arise in their seeing **– as well as the characteristics of thought –** as well as the things they think about **– are like flowers in space-fundamentally non-existent.** Basically, there aren't any flowers in space. When your eyes are defective, you see them, but if there's nothing wrong with your eyes, there are no flowers in space. Or perhaps if you look at the sun for too long, you may see flowers all over empty space. That is one way to explain it. Another way to explain it is that if you open the Buddha-eye,

whatever flowers you want to look at exist in space. These are flowers in space also. So there are two principles here.

Are the flowers seen by those who have opened their Buddha-eye real? No. They are not real either. They are also illusory transformations. But if you think you want to see them they come into being.

Then are there any flowers in space? No. Basically there isn't anything at all. Basically they do not exist. Basically there isn't anything. What are you trying to find? Why are you trying to find out if the seeing is a thing or if it is emptiness, or what? What are you looking for? You are all caught up in seeking outside – in running outside yourself to look for things.

Sutra:

"This seeing and its conditions are originally the wonderful pure bright substance of Bodhi. How can one speak of 'is' and 'is not'?

Commentary:

The Buddha said, **"This seeing and its conditions are originally the wonderful pure bright substance of Bodhi."** The seeing and the conditions of seeing are themselves the wonderful pure bright substance of your Bodhi mind. It is also the pure nature and bright substance of the everlasting true mind. Here for purposes of literary style the name "Bodhi" has been used instead. **"How can one speak of 'is' and 'is not'?** How can you say that 'is' and 'is not' can be found within the true mind, which defies duality? There is nothing dual about the true mind; it is absolute, and not in the realm of opposites, and so how can you be so confused as to speak of an 'is' and 'is not' there?

R2 He uses an analogy to ask if the one truth "is" or "is not".

Sutra:

"Manjushri, I now ask you: take yourself as an example, Manjushri. Is there still another Manjushri? Is there a Manjushri who is and a Manjushri who is not?"

Commentary:

Now the Buddha asks Manjushri Bodhisattva a question, **"Manjushri, I now ask you: take yourself as an example, Manjushri. Is there still another Manjushri? Is there a Manjushri who is and a Manjushri who is not?"** You say, 'This is Manjushri.' That's what is meant by 'a Manjushri who is.' Then is there a Manjushri who is not? What do you say?" That is what the Buddha asked Manjushri Bodhisattva, and he waits to see what Manjushri Bodhisattva will answer. You should learn to ask questions like Manjushri Bodhisattva. Don't imitate Ananda's way of asking questions. Ananda's questions are really obtuse.

R3 He answers that originally truth does not have a dual aspect.

Sutra:

"So it is, World Honored One: I am truly Manjushri. There is no Manjushri who 'is.' Why? If there were still another Manjushri who 'is' Manjushri, there would be two Manjushris. But it is not that now I am not Manjushri. In fact, neither of the two characteristics 'is' and 'is not' exist."

Commentary:

"So it is, World Honored One." Manjushri Bodhisattva says, "It is just as you explain it, Buddha. There is no Manjushri who 'is' and no Manjushri who 'is not.' There isn't any 'is' or 'is not.' **I am truly Manjushri.** I am the real Manjushri. **There is no Manjushri who 'is.'** There isn't anyone beyond me that is Manjushri. There isn't anything else. I am just Manjushri. There isn't any 'is' Manjushri or 'is not' Manjushri. **Why?** Why do I say that? If you say this Manjushri is, then what Manjushri is not? If there were two

Manjushris, then that would be acceptable. **If there were still another Manjushri who 'is' Manjushri, there would be two Manjushris.** If there is an is,' then there is an 'is not,' and that becomes two Manjushris. **But it is not that now I am not Manjushri.** But it certainly isn't that I am not Manjushri today. There is a Manjushri; but there is no 'is' Manjushri. **In fact, neither of the two characteristics 'is' and 'is not' exist.** In terms of myself, Manjushri, a particular person, the two aspects of 'is' and 'is not' do not exist, and to speak of one that 'is' Manjushri and one that 'is not' Manjushri is incorrect."

At that time he caused everyone in the great assembly to understand that there isn't something that "is" the seeing and something that "is not" the seeing. The seeing is the everlasting seeing. There is no such thing as saying that things are the seeing or that emptiness is the seeing. The seeing is the wonderfully pure bright substance of the nature of Bodhi. So you cannot set up "is" and "is not" with regard to it.

R4 He concludes by tying the analogy to the principle.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "This is not only the case with the seeing, the basic substance of wonderful Bodhi, but also with emptiness and mundane objects.

Commentary:

The more he explains, the more all-encompassing this sutra becomes. Not only is the seeing the basic substance of wonderful bright Bodhi, but emptiness and mundane dust are also. They are just like the seeing. **The Buddha said, "The wonderful brightness of the seeing is this way and so are emptiness and mundane objects.** They are just as wonderful as the seeing. There is no "is" and "is not." It is not that things are the seeing or that emptiness is the seeing. Rather, emptiness and mundane things – dust – are, like the seeing, the basic substance of the true mind. Later the four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind are explained

to be the wonderful true suchness nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. So the more this sutra is explained, the more wonderful it becomes. The more it is explained, the less you understand it, and so you say, "Since I can't understand it, I won't study it."

If you don't study it, you will never understand it. You will never open your wisdom. Now you are studying it, and so now you can open your wisdom. You can perceive that the mysterious wonder of the Buddha's doctrines is inexhaustible. So the *Shurangama Sutra* is unsurpassed.

Q2 He teaches him the method to transcend "is" and "is not".
R1 He displays the two appearances of true and false.

Sutra:

"They are basically the projections or manifestations of the wonderful brightness of unsurpassed Bodhi, the pure, perfect, true mind. They are falsely taken to be form and emptiness, as well as hearing and seeing.

Commentary:

"They are basically the projections or manifestations of the wonderful brightness of unsurpassed Bodhi. Basically, everything is the subtle wonderful, light, highest Bodhi, the enlightenment to the Way, **the pure, perfect, true mind**. The true mind is clean. **They are falsely taken to be form and emptiness, as well as hearing and seeing."** Originally the basic substance is the pure true mind. But with the production of a single thought of false dust – mundane objects – one is turned around by form, that is, by things, and by emptiness. You are turned around by things. Earlier I said, "If you can turn things around, you are the same as the Thus Come One." Because there are false thoughts, one is turned around by form and emptiness. You also do not understand your hearing-nature and your seeing-nature.

Why don't we understand? Because of the production of false thoughts. When one thought is wrong, thought after thought becomes wrong. There is a saying:

In one false move,
You lose the whole chess game.

Likewise, because of one wrong thought, you recognize the false as true. You take false things to be real one.

R2 He uses an analogy for the true and false.

Sutra:

"Just as with the second moon: which one 'is' the moon and which 'is not' the moon? Manjushri, there is only one true moon, and within it there is not a moon that 'is' or a moon that 'is not.'

Commentary:

"Just as with the second moon: Basically, it is one moon, but if you look at it with defective eyes, you see two moons. **Which one 'is' the moon and which 'is not' the moon?** Which moon is not the moon?" **"Manjushri, there is only one true moon, and within it there is not a moon that 'is' or a moon that 'is not.'"** When you have "is" and "is not," you have relative dharmas. But what is spoken of now is absolute. The basic nature of Bodhi is beyond opposites.

R3 He puts analogy and principle together.

Sutra:

"Therefore, now as you contemplate the seeing and the mundane things together, all the things you disclose are called false thoughts. You cannot transcend 'is' and 'is not' from within them.

Commentary:

"Therefore, because of this, **now as you contemplate the seeing and the mundane things together, all the things you disclose are called false thoughts."** You contemplate your seeing and things, and you disclose all kinds of forms and appearances. They are all false thoughts; they appear because of your false

thoughts. **"You cannot transcend 'is' and 'is not' from within them."** Within emptiness you cannot find something that "is" emptiness and something that "is not" emptiness. Emptiness is simply emptiness; how could there further be an emptiness that is and an emptiness that is not? Nor can you say of things that a thing "is" and "is not." It is the same with the seeing. You cannot say there is a seeing that "is" a thing or "is" emptiness, or that the seeing "is" or "is not" seeing. This will not work. In this you cannot find an "is" or an "is not.

Sutra:

"With the true essence, the wonderful enlightened bright nature, you can get beyond trying to point out or not point out."

Commentary:

"With the true essence, the genuine seeing-essence, **the wonderful enlightened bright nature,** the subtle wonderful inconceivable bright nature, **you can get beyond trying to point out or not point out."** The bright nature can teach you to get beyond trying to pinpoint things as being or not being. You felt that your doctrine was correct when you said that the seeing is a thing, and then you said the seeing is not a thing. But ultimately, is it a thing or isn't it?" The Buddha is asking Ananda. Fundamentally there is no such distinction of "is" and "is not." Your doctrine was wrong. You tried to point to things as "is" or "is not," but basically it cannot be done. It is a complete mistake to try. But now you can get beyond that.

Seeing Transcends the Ordinary

N9 He shows that the seeing transcends the ordinary.
O1 He rejects spontaneity.
P1 Ananda expands on the doctrine of permanence and asks about spontaneity.
Q1 He starts with the permanence of the nature of things.
Q2 He wonders how it compares to the teaching of externalists.

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, it is truly as the Dharma King has said: the condition of enlightenment pervades the ten directions: clear, everlasting, and by nature neither produced nor extinguished. How does it differ, then, from the first brahma Kapila's teaching of the 'profound truth' or from the teaching of the ascetics who throw ashes on themselves or from the other externalist sects that say there is a 'real self' which pervades the ten directions?

Commentary:

In response to Shakyamuni Buddha's discussion of "is" and "is not," **Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, it is truly as the Dharma King has said: the condition of enlightenment pervades the ten directions: clear, everlasting, and by nature neither produced nor extinguished."** "Clear" refers to what is pure and tranquil. Take for example a bowl of muddy water. We wouldn't say it was clear. But after the silt and sand have settled, so that you can see to the bottom, we say it is clear. The

nature of the condition of enlightenment is pure, clear, everlasting, and neither produced nor extinguished.

"How does it differ, then, from the first brahma Kapila's teaching of the 'profound truth' or from the teaching of the ascetics who throw ashes on themselves or from the other externalist sects that say there is a 'real self' which pervades the ten directions?" The First Brahman Kapila said that he had descended from the Great Brahma Heaven, a god born among people, and that in the future he would be born in the Great Brahma Heaven according to his resolve. He said, "In the future all of us will return to the Great Brahma Heaven." He was a proponent of the Brahma Heaven. "Brahma" means "pure," and Kapila, as I explained earlier – however, I believe that no one remembers – means "the external path of the yellow-haired." Do you remember Matangi's daughter? She made her mother make use of the former Brahma Heaven mantra of the Kapilas, the very sect being discussed here. The "Profound Truth" discussed by external paths has also been explained. In that dull dark inactive state, one doesn't know anything at all. "Profound" means a total lack of perception. You might say that one becomes drunk, and yet one isn't drunk. You might say that one has taken drugs, and yet one hasn't. It is simply that one doesn't know anything at all.

In India there is an external path which practices asceticism. The adherents say they want to live a "natural" existence, so they don't wear very much clothing or wash their bodies, and they lie in ashes and roll around in them until their entire bodies are covered with them. These are the outside-the-Way ascetics who throw ashes on themselves. There is another outside-the-Way sect whose adherents sleep on beds of nails. They hammer nails into a bed and they sleep on top of them. The nails don't pierce their flesh, and they say it is because they have a "vajra indestructible body." Would you say that is cheating people, or isn't it? There are other outside-the-Way sects whose adherents cultivate non-beneficial ascetic practices, such as those who don't eat food but only eat grass or the leaves of trees.

All of these sects are included in those Ananda refers to as believing in a True Self that pervades the ten directions. But as to the worth of their practices, although they endure extreme discomfort., their work will not lead to ultimate success. For instance, the non-beneficial practice of sleeping on beds of nails, and having the nails not pierce one's flesh is not of any particular worth. After all, a pig's skin is more or less impenetrable by nails; do pigs therefore have the Way? Nails can't pierce a cow's hide; do cows therefore have the Way? No. So this is a bitter practice which is not beneficial. You should not make a mistake here and think they are necessarily endowed with a vajra indestructible body just because I said they consider themselves endowed with one. In fact it is a false notion. It's just like having a pig's skin or a cow's hide and is certainly not anything extraordinary. They practice this method every day, and so they accomplish that kind of fruition and become endowed with that particular talent. But it does not count as any kind of spiritual skill, nor does it mean they have the Way.

Ananda asked the Thus Come One, "You say the condition of enlightenment pervades the ten directions; what is the difference between it and the true self which they say pervades the ten directions?"

Q3 He also wonders if the Buddha is opposing his own doctrine.

Sutra:

"Also, in the past, the World Honored One gave a lecture on Mount Lanka explaining the principle thoroughly for the sake of Great Wisdom Bodhisattva and others: 'Externalist sects always speak of spontaneity. I speak of causes and conditions which is an entirely different principle.'

Commentary:

Ananda continues, **"Also, in the past, the World Honored One gave a lecture on Mount Lanka explaining the principle thoroughly for the sake of Great Wisdom Bodhisattva and others:** When the *Lankavatara Sutra* was spoken, the Bodhisattva

Great Wisdom was the interlocutor, just as in the *Shurangama Sutra* the Venerable Ananda is the interlocutor. "And others" means that not only Great Wisdom Bodhisattva but many other Bodhisattvas were there as well. "The World Honored One spoke the doctrine that **externalist sects always speak of spontaneity.**" The various outside-the-Way sects at that time constantly explained the doctrine of spontaneity. What doctrine is that? This is what they say:

Who unloosed the rivers and seas
and piled up the mountain peaks?
Who sharpened the thorns and brambles,
who painted the birds and beasts?
Of all there is,
none has a creator;
Therefore I say
that it comes into being spontaneously.

Who started the seas? You can't name the person who began the seas. Nor can you find the person who initiated the rivers. Although in China there was an Emperor Yu who tamed the waters, there probably wasn't that kind of talent yet in India. Who took the earth and piled it into mountains? Who created the mountain peaks? How is it they are so high? By asking who made them, they come to the conclusion that they arose spontaneously. Spontaneously a river appeared, a sea came into existence. Spontaneously there were mountains. The thorns and brambles, the birds and beasts – absolutely everything, without any help from people, is produced of itself. "Of all there is, none has a creator; therefore I say that it comes into being spontaneously." But **I speak of causes and conditions**. Here Ananda is quoting what the Buddha said earlier. Buddha, you explained the Dharma of causes and conditions, **which is not the same state**. It is not the same as the outside-the-Way sects' view of spontaneity. However, the doctrine I hear you speaking now seems the same as the doctrine spoken by sects outside the Way. You say that the condition of enlightenment

pervades the ten directions, and the outside-the-Way sects say that their True Self also pervades the ten directions. Isn't that the same? The name is different, that's all. Your condition of enlightenment is more than likely the True Self. And their True Self is more than likely the condition of enlightenment. Isn't that the way it is?

What is meant by the "cause" and the "condition" that the Buddha speaks of? I have often told you. The cause is the seed. What contributes to its growth are the conditions. Planting a seed in the ground is a cause. Conditions are the aiding factors which contribute to the growth – mud, dirt, water, manure, sunlight, and other such things are called the conditions which aid and contribute to its growth. Buddha, you said that everything consists of causes and conditions, and that the causes and conditions break up the outside-the-Way sects' dharma of spontaneity. Causes and conditions are not the same as spontaneity, and so they destroy the theory of spontaneity. But your condition of enlightenment and the outside-the-Way sects' true self both pervade the ten directions. The ten directions extend only so far, and if yours pervades it and theirs pervades it, they must be the same.

Sutra:

"Now as I contemplate the nature of enlightenment as spontaneous, as neither produced nor extinguished, and as apart from all empty falseness and inversion, it seems to have nothing to do with your causes and conditions or the spontaneity advocated by others. Would you please enlighten us on this point lest we should fall into deviant paths, thus enabling us to obtain the true mind, the bright nature of wonderful enlightenment?"

Commentary:

"Now as I contemplate the nature of enlightenment as spontaneous – I carefully contemplate the enlightened nature which the World Honored One spoke of as being spontaneous. It is **neither produced nor extinguished**; isn't that spontaneity? It is **apart from all empty falseness and inversion –** apart from all

upside-down characteristics and from the upside-down mind. **It seems to have nothing to do with your causes and conditions or the spontaneity advocated by others.** It doesn't seem to be causes and conditions and it also is different from spontaneity. But, then again, it seems to be the same." This is what is meant by "seems to be and yet is not." **"Would you please enlighten us on this point lest we should fall into deviant paths.** Buddha, how can you teach me so that I won't believe in the theories of those outside-the-Way sects?" "Deviant paths" refers to outside-the-Way sects. **"Thus enabling us to obtain the true mind, the bright nature of wonderful enlightenment?"** How can I obtain my true mind? I ask the Buddha to have compassion and instruct me.

P2 The Thus Come One refutes this by bringing up the doctrine of according with conditions.

Q1 He upbraids him for doubting and asks about the substance.

Sutra:

The Buddha told Ananda, "Now I have instructed you with such expedients in order to tell you the truth, yet you do not awaken to it but mistake it for spontaneity.

Commentary:

The Buddha is devoid of a temper, but it is probable he was frowning when he said this, because that small disciple was much too confused. **The Buddha told Ananda, "Now I have instructed you with such expedients in order to tell you the truth.** I have been explaining this and that aspect of it – I have already explained it seven or eight ways. This is the ninth of the Ten Manifestations of the Seeing, and you still don't understand. How can you be this way?" "Expedients" are skillful, provisional Dharma-doors which are not actual. They are a case of "regarding the opportunities and dispensing the teaching in order to speak Dharma for people." The Buddha looks to see what doctrine he should use to instruct Ananda and then uses a clever, wonderful, provisional, expedient dharma, such as the various analogies and ways of manifesting the seeing he has already used, and such as his questioning Ananda about the

mind. "Truths" refer to the true and actual Dharma the Buddha has also explained. **"And you still have not awaken."** The Buddha was very put out with Ananda when he said that. After all that I've said to you, after all the principles I've explained, you still don't listen, and you haven't understood in the least. **Instead, you produce doubts about its being spontaneity.** You still compare the doctrine I explain with the spontaneity of the outside-the-Way sects. You are really making a mistake. How can you be so dense? How can you compare them? They are not the same at all."

Sutra:

"Ananda, if it definitely were spontaneous, you should be able to distinguish the substance of the spontaneity.

Commentary:

"Ananda, let me tell you: **if it definitely were spontaneous –** if you are determined to say that the doctrine I explain is the same as the spontaneity of the outside-the-Way sects, **you should be able to distinguish the substance of the spontaneity**. Now we will examine this spontaneity and make it clear and delineate it. The spontaneity has a substance. They say, for example, 'Who loosed the rivers?' Rivers come into existence spontaneously, and so there is still a river. 'Who loosed the seas?' They say the seas exist spontaneously, so there is still a sea. The sea is the basic substance of spontaneity. It still has a substance. They say, 'Why piled up the mountains?' No person could make a mountain, so the mountains are spontaneously born. So there is still the substance of a mountain. The substance of the mountain is the substance of spontaneity. Now where is the spontaneous substance of my Dharma? Speak up."

Q2 He questions him and immediately offers a refutation.

Sutra:

"Now you look into the wonderful bright seeing. What is its self? Does the seeing take bright light as its self? Does it take

darkness as its self? Does it take emptiness as its self? Does it take solid objects as its self?

Commentary:

"You still have not understood, so I will explain it for you further. You listen." The Buddha presents another theory to reveal to him that it is separate from all ordinary seeing. **"Now you look into the wonderful bright seeing. What is its self?** Use your mind again to take a look. What self is there in the condition of your enlightened seeing's wonderful brightness? What is your seeing's basic substance? You say the seeing is spontaneous? If it is spontaneous, it must have a substance. What is the basic substance of the seeing? Tell me. **Does the seeing take bright light as its self?** Does the seeing take light as its spontaneous basic substance? **Does it take darkness as its self?** Does darkness make up the spontaneous substance of the seeing? **Does it take emptiness as its self?** Does it take emptiness to make up its spontaneous basic substance? **Or does it take solid objects as its self?** Or does form make up its spontaneous basic substance? Speak up." Now he has asked Ananda, and Ananda will have a comeback. But before he can speak, the Buddha offers his own refutations.

Sutra:

"Ananda, if its self consists in light, you should not see darkness. Moreover, if it takes emptiness as the substance of its self, you should not see solid objects. Continuing in the same way, if it takes all dark appearances as its self, then when it is light, the seeing-nature is cut off and extinguished, and how can you see light?"

Commentary:

The Buddha explains it for Ananda a little more deeply. **"Ananda, if its self consists in light, you should not see darkness.** If you take light to be the basic substance of spontaneity, and if you say seeing is the same as spontaneity, then when it is dark, the light should be cut off and extinguished, that is, it should disappear; and so you should not see darkness. After all, you say

light is its basic substance, so how could it see when it is dark? **Moreover, if it takes emptiness as the substance of its self, you should not see solid objects.** By solid objects is meant places which cannot be seen through. If you take emptiness to be the spontaneous basic substance of your seeing, your seeing should disappear in the face of solid objects. Without emptiness, its own substance is gone. **Continuing in the same way, if it takes all dark appearances as its self, then when it is light, the seeing-nature is cut off and extinguished, and how can you see light?** The principle holds in every case. The seeing-nature would be extinguished when there is light. Thus to say that darkness is its basic substance is also a mistake."

O2 He rejects causes and conditions.
P1 Ananda relents on spontaneity and wonders about causes and conditions.

Sutra:

Ananda said, "I am certain that the nature of this wonderful seeing is not spontaneous. Now I discern that it is produced from causes and conditions. But I do not yet have it clear in my mind. I now ask the Thus Come One how this idea is consonant with the nature of causes and conditions."

Commentary:

Ananda said before that it was not causes and conditions; now he says that it is. Ananda also can fluctuate. **Ananda said, "I am certain that the nature of this wonderful seeing is not spontaneous.** Certainly, just as you say, the subtle wonderful seeing-essence which sees everything is not spontaneous, because it has no substance. **Now I discern that it is produced from causes and conditions."** He doesn't say now that he considers; he says he discerns the doctrine. **"But I do not yet have it clear in my mind.** I think the seeing is produced from causes and conditions, but then again it seems to not be in accord with principle. It seems that there is no such thing. That's what I think, but my mind is not absolutely clear about it." What do you think of him? He doesn't understand, but he still keeps trying on hats. Now he's trying on the causes-and-

conditions hat. **"I now ask the Thus Come One how this idea is consonant with the nature of causes and conditions.** World Honored One, how can this doctrine be explained? How can it fit with the nature of causes and conditions? Please explain this to me, Buddha." Now it was not the Buddha who said that the seeing-essence is produced from the nature of causes and conditions; it was Ananda who said it, and he himself doesn't understand. He wants the Buddha to explain it. Basically what Ananda said lacks principle. He doesn't understand the doctrine. First he says it is spontaneity, then he says it is causes and conditions, and then because he doesn't understand how it could be, he wants someone else to explain it. Meeting someone like Ananda is enough to give one a headache.

P2 The Thus Come One refutes it by bringing up the doctrine used to refute spontaneity.

Q1 First he refutes causes.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "You say it is causes and conditions. I ask you again: because you are now seeing, the seeing-nature manifests. Is it because of light that the seeing exists? Is it because of darkness that the seeing exists? Is it because of emptiness that the seeing exists? Is it because of solid objects that the seeing exists?

Commentary:

The Buddha said, "You say it is causes and conditions. You want me to explain to you how it is consonant with the nature of causes and conditions. But it's you who say it is causes and conditions. Well , I will explain about causes and conditions for you. But first I want to ask you something. **I ask you again: because you are now seeing, the seeing-nature manifests.** Your seeing-nature appears before you. **Is it because of light that the seeing exists? Is it because of darkness that the seeing exists? Is it because of emptiness that the seeing exists? Is it because of solid objects that the seeing exists?** In the end, how does your

seeing-essence come into being?" The Buddha is truly one of great kindness and great compassion. He encounters someone who keeps "kneading the bean curd" so to speak – who keeps going back and forth and around and about – and with the utmost compassion, he still keeps explaining to him. It's probably the case that Ananda has been spoiled by the Buddha. He was the Buddha's favorite cousin and he was in the habit of being allowed to say and do as he pleased. He's just like these disciples of mine now who are not afraid of their teacher. They dare to say anything at all – right to the teacher's face. When I was in Hong Kong, my disciples didn't dare open their mouths when they were around me. They were very afraid of me. You American disciples are not afraid of your teacher. And I don't wish to make you afraid of me, so for now it's "yes." "Okay."

Sutra:

"Ananda, if light brings it into existence, you should not see darkness, and if it exists because of darkness, you should not see light. It is the same with emptiness and solid objects.

Commentary:

"Ananda, you should know that I have already explained many similar doctrines. Now I will explain it once again for you. **Ananda, if light brings it into existence –** if you say the seeing exists because of light – **you should not see darkness**. When it is dark, you should not be able to see darkness. **If it exists because of darkness, you should not see light.** If you say, 'Ah, it is not because of light that it exists, but because of darkness, there is seeing because of darkness,' then when it is light your seeing would disappear. Why? You rely on the darkness in order to see; now that the darkness is gone, your seeing is also gone. The very same doctrine applies in other cases. If it is because of emptiness that the seeing exists, then where there are solid objects it would disappear. If it is because of solid objects that the seeing exists, then where there is emptiness it would disappear. But that isn't how it is with you. You can see when it is light, you can see when it is dark, you

can see where there is emptiness, and you can see where there are solid objects. How could your suggestion that the seeing is based on causes and conditions be correct?"

Q2 He refutes conditions.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Ananda, does the seeing derive from the condition of light? Does the seeing derive from the condition of darkness? Does the seeing derive from the condition of emptiness? Does the seeing derive from the condition of solid objects?

Commentary:

"I spoke before about causes: now I will ask you about conditions. I will explain it a little more clearly for you." Do you see how compassionate the Buddha is? He sees Ananda still standing there wide-eyed and staring, having still not understood, so he explains it again. **"Moreover, Ananda, does the seeing derive from the condition of light? Does the seeing derive from the condition of darkness?** Does the seeing follow upon light, or does it follow upon darkness? **Does the seeing derive from the condition of emptiness? Does the seeing derive from the condition of solid objects?** Is it from the causal condition of emptiness that there is seeing? Or is it from the causal condition of solid objects that there is seeing?"

Sutra:

"Ananda, if it exists because of the condition of emptiness, you should not see solid objects. If it exists because of the condition of solid objects, you should not see emptiness: it is the same with light and darkness.

Commentary:

"Ananda, if it exists because of the condition of emptiness – if it is because of the emptiness that there is seeing, **you should not see solid objects**. The principle here is about the same as the one

explained above. But because of the Buddha's compassion, he explains it in great detail, not fearing the trouble involved. **If it exists because of the condition of solid objects –** if it is due to solid objects that there is seeing, **you should not see emptiness: it is the same with light and darkness**. The doctrine of it being from the condition of light or from the condition of darkness is the same as the doctrine of its being from emptiness or from solid objects.

O3 He rules out the false and ordinary.

Sutra:

"Thus you should know that the essential, enlightened wonderful brightness is due to neither causes nor conditions and it does not arise spontaneously.

Commentary:

Now the Buddha again rouses Ananda from his stupidity. **"Thus you should know –** don't continue to be so confused! **– that the essential, enlightened wonderful brightness, the seeing, is due to neither causes nor conditions**. It is not because of causes, it is not because of conditions, **and it does not arise spontaneously**. Now do you know?

Sutra:

"It is not that which is not spontaneous. It is not that it is not; nor is it that it is not not. It is not that which 'is' or 'is not.'

Commentary:

It is something transcending all contraries, relativities, and partialities. **"It is not that which is not spontaneous."** Now this certainly does not say that the seeing-essence does rise spontaneously. The double negative means that there is not even no spontaneous arisal. **"It is not that it is not; nor is it that it is not not."** There is neither a negation nor a lack of negation. There is no is, and there is no is not. **"It is not that which 'is' or 'is not.'"** There isn't any correct or incorrect. You can't think about this with your mind that makes distinctions. Once you think about "is" and

"is not," you have left the doctrine of the seeing essence. Then what is there?

Sutra:

"Any dharma is that which is apart from all characteristics.

Commentary:

If you separate from all empty and false characteristics, that is the true and actual Dharma. Don't base your skill on empty and false characteristics. **"Any dharma is that which is apart from all characteristics."** If you can be separate from all empty and false characteristics, that is your genuine seeing-essence, that is the genuine wonderful Dharma. What are these characteristics? They are the characteristics of false thought. To be apart from false thought is the wonderful Dharma of true suchness. If you do not separate yourself from the characteristics of false thinking, you do not unite with the wonderful Dharma of true suchness.

O4 He scolds him for bringing up the ordinary.

Sutra:

"Now in the midst of dharmas, how can you use your mind to make distinctions that are based on worldly sophistries, terms, and characteristics? That is like grasping at empty space with your hand: you only succeed in tiring yourself out. How could empty space possibly yield to your grasp?"

Commentary:

The World Honored One continues speaking to Ananda: **Now in the midst of dharmas, how can you use your mind to make distinctions that are based on worldly sophistries, terms, and characteristics?** Why do you dwell in false thoughts and use your mind? Why do you base your skill on false thought? Worldly doctrines of spontaneity and causes and conditions are sophistries. Sophistries are clever discussions of unreal things. You use the terms and characteristics of sophistries to make distinctions about my wonderful Dharma, to make distinctions about my wonderful

Shurangama Samadhi. How can you do that? **That is like grasping at empty space with your hand.** To use your mind which has false thinking, your conscious mind that makes distinctions, to fathom the wonderful Shurangama Samadhi is like trying to grab hold of empty space and stroke it with your hand. How can you capture empty space? Were you to ask a child if empty space can be grasped, even the child would say it can't be done. What you are doing now is grasping at empty space. It is like Teng Hua Feng, who said, "First capture empty space, then you can capture Teng Hua Feng." He said it to a ghost which had captured him. Upon being captured, he reasoned with the ghost: "Wait a bit, can't you?" he said. "There's a small matter I haven't finished attending to. When I have finished that up, I'll accompany you to see King Yama."

Who was Teng Hua Feng?

He was a cultivator of the Way, a monk with samadhi-power. When he was in samadhi, the ghosts and spirits couldn't see him. But he was visible to the ghosts and spirits when he left the samadhi. That time he had left samadhi, and the Ghost of Impermanence paid him a visit.

What is the Ghost of Impermanence?

When your time comes to die, it is the friend who comes to accompany you to see King Yama. That friend came and captured Teng Hua Feng and said, "Your life should end. Come with me to see King Yama," And he locked Teng Hua Feng up in hand cuffs and iron chains.

Teng Hua Feng said to him, "Friend, don't be so impolite. I still have one thing to attend to, and then I will go with you."

The ghost thought, "You're opposing me for having captured you. Well, it doesn't matter if I show you a little courtesy." So he said, "What do you have to attend to?"

Whereupon Teng Hua Feng folded up his legs into full lotus posture, and as soon as he was settled he entered samadhi. The

samadhi he entered was the No-Thought Samadhi. Just before he entered it, he said, "Now go and capture empty space, and then you can take along Teng Hua Feng." He said, "If you can capture empty space, then come back and take me to see King Yama." Once he had entered samadhi, the ghost had no way of capturing him. So everyone should know that samadhi-power is extremely important.

Samadhi-power is not being turned around by things, but being able to turn everything around. Didn't it say earlier in the text, "If you can turn things around, then you are the same as the Thus Come One." Cultivating to develop samadhi-power is the same. You have it no matter what circumstance you encounter. I will explain a doctrine to you which is not a joke, but is true: if a man truly has samadhi-power, when he sees a woman, no matter how pretty she is, he can refrain from moving his mind. He can avoid giving rise to emotional desire. That is samadhi-power. If as soon as you see a woman you grow unsteady and start to shake and a hand suddenly grows right out of your throat, that's a lack of samadhi-power. We can switch the sentence around and say that is the same for women when they see men. They should remain in a state of unmoving suchness, and if they are able to remain unturned by the emotional desire, they have samadhi-power. That's just the first step. You shouldn't think that that is something extraordinary in itself. That's the first step. The first step is to gain the ability to not be turned around by emotional desire, so that seeing is the same as not having seen. You face situations without a mind. You're confronted with the experience and still haven't any mind. That is samadhi-power. You can measure the extent of your samadhi-power by yourself. For example, if you can remain unmoved when the emotional desire between men and women comes to mind, then you have a little bit of samadhi-power. To take it farther, if you can remain in the company of your girl friend without the arising of the least incident, that is genuine skill. But the skill is not easily developed. If you have that kind of samadhi-power, you certainly can cultivate and develop a vajra indestructible body. If you lack that samadhi-power, what is to be done? Don't be satisfied with the status quo,

saying, "I haven't got that much samadhi-power, so forget it, I'm not going to cultivate. I'll just give in to it." That's useless. You're just riding for a fall. The less samadhi power you have, the more you must cultivate. For instance, "I sit in meditation and the pain comes. The more pain there is, the more I want to sit. I will force myself to do what is difficult." That is also samadhi-power.

You only succeed in tiring yourself out. The Buddha tells Ananda that using his mind to invent sophistries about the seeing-nature is like trying to grasp empty space. All you do is toil bitterly, to no avail. You wear yourself out and exhaust your own energy. You lose your strength. After all, if you continually paw at empty space with your hand, can you deny that your arm would get tired? Eventually your hand would hurt and would start to ache from weariness. You knead and clutch and grasp and can't get hold of empty space. You grasp it and there's nothing, you grasp again and again there is nothing. It would truly be a case of having nothing to do and going to look for something to do. And that's the way Ananda was. He didn't have anything to do. It was probably the case that as a monk he ate his fill and for lack of anything to do he began clutching at empty space.

How could empty space possibly yield to your grasp? How could empty space comply so that you could catch it? Empty space is basically empty; how could you capture it? If there were something you could grasp, then it would not be empty space. There has to be a thing before you can grasp it. For instance, this cup: because there is a cup, I am able to grasp it. If the cup weren't there you could grasp back and forth and up and down and there still wouldn't be anything. So the Buddha likens Ananda, who develops his skill based exclusively on the conscious mind that makes distinctions, to someone who grasps at empty space. The principle is the same. You just increase your own weariness, which is not of the least benefit to the self-nature.

Seeings is Apart from Seeing

N10 He shows seeing is apart from seeing.
O1 Ananda leads with the teaching and asks a question.

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "If the nature of the wonderful enlightenment has neither causes nor conditions, then why does the World Honored One always tell the bhikshus that the nature of seeing derives from the four conditions of emptiness, brightness, the mind, and the eyes? What does that mean?"

Commentary:

How much gall would you say Ananda has? He sasses his teacher. He rudely tries to argue publicly with the Buddha. More than anything else, it's like a game of chess. **Ananda said to the Buddha**, "World Honored One, **if the nature of the wonderful enlightenment, the seeing-essence, has neither causes nor conditions, then why does the World Honored One always tell the bhikshus that the nature of seeing derives from the four conditions?**" Ananda is borrowing the Buddha's principles. "It's you that said this, Buddha, not me. You talked about the nature of seeing that way." Listen to him! He is protesting against the Buddha. Ananda had got snagged left and right so many times he hasn't said one thing right – that by now he's probably heedless of everything. "I'm going to have it out with the Buddha." So he says,

"World Honored One, you keep saying that the seeing-nature is complete with four conditions, and so why does the Buddha now say that it is not causes and conditions?" He certainly must have had enough gall to fill the skies to be prompted to argue with the Buddha like this.

What are the four conditions? **Emptiness, brightness, the mind, and the eyes? What does that mean?** How do you explain this doctrine? In the past you explained it according to these four conditions, and now you are going back on what you said. How can you do that? Is it possible for the Buddha to say things which don't count? The Buddha doesn't lie. How can you say it is that way and flow say it isn't?" You can see that meeting up with this kind of disciple is not an easy task. Thank goodness the Buddha is the Buddha. If it were I, I'd have no way to handle him.

O2 He makes clear that the former teaching was expedient.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "Ananda, what I have said about all the worldly causes and conditions has nothing to do with the primary meaning.

Commentary:

Ananda's ability in debate is so good that he has subdued the Buddha. **The Buddha said, "Ananda, what I have said about all the worldly causes and conditions has nothing to do with the primary meaning.** It is not the principal doctrine. What I said then was provisional and expedient. You should not think that the things I said then are true. At that time it was as if I were rearing little children by telling you to be good and not be rambunctious. "When you grow up, you can be an official. You can do important things." It was an expedient, and provisional Dharma-door. Doesn't it seem from the tone of what he says that the Buddha has been subdued by Ananda?

In the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, Manjushri Bodhisattva asks the layman Vimalakirti, "What is the primary meaning?"

What do you suppose the layman Vimalakirti said? Can you guess? If any of you know, then you are truly a present-day Vimalakirti. Do any of you know what the primary meaning is?

Anyone who has read the *Vimalakirti Sutra* will know. But if I tell you, you should not go around posturing in front of people, imitating the layman Vimalakirti's gesture, because you haven't reached his status. Don't be like some people who make the mistake of pretending to be what they aren't. Vimalakirti closed his eyes and did not open his mouth. He didn't say a word. Manjushri Bodhisattva said, "Oh, you understand." That's the way it was, but you can't do the same thing when you go someplace and someone asks you what the primary meaning is. That is unacceptable. It's fine to know about it, to be aware of the principle, but you can't go about putting on airs, as if you were the same as Vimalakirti. That is impermissible. The same is true when reading the *Sixth Patriarch's Sutra*, which contains a lot of principle. Sometimes people make "verbal Zen" out of these principles. If you genuinely understand the doctrine, then it is all right. But it is not all right to indulge in "verbal Zen." I will repeat this because it is very important. You can't go around trying to carry on "Ch'an banter" with people.

What is "Ch'an banter"?

Someone points a finger or makes a fist or some other such gesture. That is impermissible for you to do. Why?

You haven't the experience. You are not enlightened. It's not you who can make these kinds of gestures. One who makes these kinds of gestures is one who is enlightened. One who is enlightened has the penetrating understanding of absolutely everything. I had an encounter recently with someone who was so confused that he acted like he was drunk and supposed himself to be enlightened. So I told him to explain the *Seven Kinds of Sutra Titles* and the *Six Realizations*, and he couldn't come up with one title. He could not complete one realization. What enlightenment do you suppose he had attained? If he were an enlightened person, then even if he

didn't know the answer to the question, he would have been able to expound principle. Why? Because all principles come forth from the mind. If he were an enlightened person, his mind would be full of light. And he would have penetrated to the understanding of all principles, so that even if he didn't know the particulars, he could explain it with principle. That's what is meant by enlightened. So you decidedly cannot steep tea in cold water and drink the dregs. Someone who forces the issue and announces that he is enlightened is totally shameless, completely without a sense of shame. There can be no such people in Buddhism. They are a useless lot, I'll tell you.

O3 He explains now that it is not conditions.

Sutra:

"Ananda, I ask you again: people in the world say, 'I can see.' What is meant by seeing? What is not seeing?"

Ananda said, "Due to the light of the sun, the moon, and lamps, people in the world can see all kinds of appearances: that is called seeing. If it were not for these three kinds of light, they would not be able to see."

Commentary:

The Buddha felt that Ananda was his little cousin and he should always take pity on him. So again he calls out, **Ananda, I ask you again:** Child, I will again ask you: **people in the world say, 'I can see.'** Everyone says he can see. The text does not have the Buddha saying he can see. It is each person speaking of himself. **What is meant by seeing?** What is seeing? **What is not seeing?** Tell me the doctrine involved.

Ananda has now heard the Buddha subdued by him. He's been victorious, and so he doesn't stop to think, he just speaks out. **Ananda said, "Due to the light of the sun, the moon, and lamps, people in the world can see all kinds of appearances: that is called seeing.** Without them, we can't see. **If it were not for these three kinds of light, they would not be able to see."**

Sutra:

"Ananda, if it is called 'not seeing' when there is no light, you should not see darkness. If in fact you do see darkness, which is none other than the lack of light, how can you say there is an absence of seeing?

Commentary:

Whenever Ananda says something he contradicts himself. He slaps his own cheek, as it were. He opposes his own principle. Thus he says that if these three kinds of light are lacking there isn't any seeing. The Buddha challenges his essential point. You say there is no seeing. I'll ask you about that. **Ananda, if it is called 'not seeing' when there is no light, you should not see darkness.** Didn't you say that in the absence of light, shed by sun, moon, and lamps, you cannot see? In fact this doctrine has already been explained, but it is to be feared that Ananda, despite his great learning, no longer remembers it, so the Buddha repeats it for him. Since you say there is no seeing in the absence of light, you should not see darkness. In explaining the sutra, I asked you earlier what a blind man sees, and the answer was "black." It's the same thing here. Seeing blackness is seeing, too.

If in fact you do see darkness, which is none other than the lack of light, how can you say there is an absence of seeing? You cannot argue with this theory because it has already been established that you do see darkness, which is simply the absence of light. You can't say it is an absence of seeing. It's all right to say there is no light, but you cannot say there is no seeing. Ananda has run into another snag.

Sutra:

"Ananda, if, when it is dark, you call it 'not seeing' because you do not see light, then since it is now light and you do not see the characteristic of darkness, it should also be called 'not seeing.' Thus, the two characteristics would both be called 'not seeing.'

Commentary:

Ananda, if, when it is dark, you call it 'not seeing' because you do not see light – in a dark place you don't see light, and you say this is not to see at all. **Then since it is now light –** now you are in a time of light, in the presence of lamp-light, sunlight, and moonlight **– and you do not see the characteristic of darkness, it should also be called 'not seeing.'** When the light comes, the darkness goes, and you no longer see darkness. By your reasoning, there would be no seeing in this situation either. Thus, the two characteristics would both be called 'not seeing.' The two characteristics that have been discussed, light and darkness, would both be not seeing. Right? Is that what you mean?

Sutra:

"Although these two characteristics replace one another, your seeing-nature does not lapse for an instant. Thus you can know that there is seeing in both cases. How, then, can you say there is no seeing?

Commentary:

You see the Buddha is a great debater, and now you would probably be victorious in debate, whoever you debated with. **Although these two characteristics replace one another:** the two characteristics of light and darkness contend with each other. Light claims that it is the seeing, and darkness contends that it is the seeing. Ananda, you say that neither one is the seeing. What is actually the case? **Your seeing-nature does not lapse for an instant.** The succession of light and dark does not affect your seeing-nature's ability to see. It is certain that your seeing-nature does not increase or decrease. It is neither produced nor extinguished. It is not the case that your seeing-nature temporarily disappears.

Thus you can know that there is seeing in both cases. You see light, and you see darkness, and you can't say that either one is a case of not seeing. **How, then, can you say there is no seeing?**

Since there is seeing in both cases, what do you say is not seeing? Speak up. He questions a level deeper. Speak up.

O4 He actually shows it is apart from seeing.
P1 First he decides the primary meaning of being apart from conditions.

Sutra:

"Therefore, Ananda, you should know that when you see light, the seeing is not the light. When you see darkness, the seeing is not the darkness. When you see emptiness, the seeing is not the emptiness. When you see solid objects, the seeing is not the solid objects.

Commentary:

Therefore, Ananda, because of the doctrine just explained, **you should know that when you see light, the seeing is not the light.** When you look at light, your looking is certainly not the light; your seeing-nature is certainly not the light. It certainly is not that your seeing-nature follows after the light and turns into it, that your seeing-nature is turned around by that state. **When you see darkness, the seeing is not the darkness.** When you look at blackness your seeing certainly is not the blackness. Your seeing has still not changed. It is the same as the seeing that sees light; it is identical, without any distinction. **When you see emptiness, the seeing is not the emptiness.** When you look at emptiness, your seeing certainly is not turned around by the emptiness. It does not run after emptiness. **When you see solid objects, the seeing is not the solid objects.** When you see places where there are solid objects, it certainly is not that your seeing follows after that and becomes a solid object. It cannot be turned around by that kind of external situation. It cannot be shaken by external things. It is your everlasting unchanging seeing-nature.

P2 He then establishes the primary meaning is apart from seeing.

Sutra:

"Having realized these four meanings, you should also know that when you see your seeing, the seeing is not the seeing to be

seen. Since the former seeing is beyond the latter, the latter cannot reach it. That being the case, how can you say that your absolute intuitive perception has something to do with causes and conditions or spontaneity or that it has something to do with mixing and uniting?

Commentary:

"Having realized these four meanings: these are the four meanings spoken of above, the four causal conditions by which the seeing-nature is accomplished. Now that you have realized that the seeing-nature is not contingent upon the four aspects of light, darkness, emptiness, or solid objects, **you should also know that when you see your seeing, the seeing is not the seeing to be seen.** Here the first "seeing" refers to our genuine seeing, true perception, and the second "seeing" refers to the seeing-essence, which, although it is also said to be a genuine seeing, is ever so slightly false. The first seeing is a pure seeing. It is the genuine true seeing. The second carries with it a bit of falseness. So when your genuine seeing is able to see the false seeing, the seeing is not the seeing. Your genuine seeing is apart from all characteristics with substance. It has no substantial characteristic. There isn't anything at all. So it is said, "The seeing is not the seeing." No seeing is accomplished. Since there is basically nothing at all, you cannot give it a name. This is the point which is called "separation from the spoken word." It is said:

The mouth wishes to speak
but is at a loss for words.
The minds wants to seize upon conditions,
but reflection ceases.

The mind wants to think but has no way to do so. This is to be apart from the mark of the spoken word – you cannot speak of it – and apart from the mark of the written word. It cannot be represented by any word.

The path of words and language is severed,
The place the mind can go is extinguished.

The way of words and language is gone. The mind has no place to go; this means that the places where the mind thinks are gone. So at this time it is said that the seeing is not the seeing. This doctrine is not at all easy to understand. But also, if you are familiar with Buddhist studies, it is very easy to understand.

Since there isn't anything at all, how can you also say that the seeing is causes and conditions, or that it is spontaneity? **"Since the former seeing is beyond the latter, the latter cannot reach it.** Since your seeing is different from the seeing, your seeing cannot catch up to it. There isn't anything, so what are you looking for?" "The latter cannot reach it" means that your false seeing cannot see it. What is the seeing you cannot see? It is your genuine seeing.

"That being the case, how can you say that your absolute intuitive perception has something to do with causes and conditions or spontaneity or that it has something to do with mixing and uniting? Why do you still want to say your seeing-essence, the absolute, intuitive perception, is the causes and conditions that I spoke of in the past? Why do you bring that up as a comparison? And why bring up a comparison with the spontaneity taught by the sects outside the Way? And why bring up the characteristics of mixing and uniting by saying that everyone mixes together in a mixed-up union?" The characteristic of mixing and uniting is like when *chao-tze* – Chinese raviolis – break up when you boil them; you can't distinguish them one from another.

The Buddha tells Ananda that when he spoke the Dharma of causes and conditions, it was for the sake of those who had first begun to study, people of the Small Vehicle, that is, the provisional vehicle of the Sound Hearers and the Conditioned-Enlightened Ones, and also for the adherents of outside-the-Way sects, to refute the doctrine of spontaneity.

Now I am explaining the *Shurangama Sutra* in order to manifest and display the great Shurangama Samadhi. That kind of wonderful meaning absolutely cannot be compared to causes and conditions. How can you still bring up causes and conditions and compare it to the primary meaning? How can you compare it to the great Shurangama Samadhi? That's like mistaking copper for gold. You are too attached! You can't think like that!

P3 He concludes by exhorting them to persevere and well consider Bodhi.

Sutra:

"You narrow-minded Sound Hearers are so inferior and ignorant that you are unable to penetrate through to the purity of the characteristic of reality. Now I will teach you. You should consider it well, and do not become weary or negligent on the wonderful road to Bodhi."

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha said, **"You narrow-minded Sound Hearers,** you people of the Two Vehicles, **are so inferior and ignorant.** Your minds are very narrow and small, your awareness is quite inferior. You are completely without knowledge. You Sound Hearers know only how to benefit yourselves and not how to benefit others. You know only how to attend to yourselves, and you pay no attention to the pain and suffering of other living beings. You are "self-ending arhats." "Ignorant" means to have no genuine knowledge. The knowledge spoken of here, however, is not that of ordinary worldly knowledge, but the genuine knowledge of the Great Vehicle Buddhadharma. You lack knowledge of genuine Great Vehicle Buddhism. This also refers to the wonderful samadhi of the Shurangama primary meaning. You Sound Hearers don't understand it, and **so you are unable to penetrate through to the purity of the characteristic of reality."** "To penetrate through" means to understand, At present your minds are too heavily attached, the distinctions your mind makes are too profuse, for you to understand what lies in the Great Vehicle teaching, the Great Vehicle Buddhadharma, the purity of the characteristic of reality.

What is meant by the characteristic of reality? The characteristic of reality is no characteristic. This is the first explanation. Yet nothing is without the characteristic of reality: that is the second explanation. All characteristics are produced from within it. That is what is meant by the characteristic of reality being no characteristic, yet nothing being without the characteristic of reality. The third explanation is that there are no characteristics and there is nothing which is not a characteristic. All dharmas are born from the characteristic of reality. So the "characteristic of reality" is the basic substance of dharma.

So you want to find the characteristic of reality, since it is the basic substance of dharma? What is it ultimately like? You cannot see it. It just has been given a name, "the characteristic of reality", that's all. It's as Lao Tze said, "The way that can be spoken of is not the eternal Way." If you can talk about your way, if you can explain it, then it is not the eternal way. "The name that can be named is not the eternal name." If you have a name that can be spoken out, it is not an eternal name. So then he said, "The nameless is the beginning of heaven and earth. The named is the mother of the myriad things." That's what Lao Tze's philosophy is like. All I'm doing now is bringing it up to help make the doctrine clear.

The characteristic of reality is true emptiness and it is also wonderful existence. Do you say that true emptiness is empty? It is not, because within it is produced wonderful existence. Wonderful existence is certainly not existence. True emptiness is not empty, and wonderful existence does not exist. Because it does not exist, it is said to be wonderful existence. Because it is not empty, it is said to be true emptiness. The characteristic of reality is the same doctrine. If you understand this doctrine, a thorough understanding of a single thing is a thorough understanding of everything.

What is our self-nature like?

The self-nature is like empty space. Would you say there is anything in empty space? There is absolutely everything in empty space. But you cannot see it. The existence within emptiness is

wonderful existence. The lack of emptiness within emptiness is true emptiness. Since true emptiness is not empty, it is called wonderful existence. Since wonderful existence is not existence, it is called true emptiness. These two names are one. You investigate them in detail and find, however, that there is not even one. To give it a name is just to put a head on top of a head. You say, "This is true emptiness, and this is wonderful existence. This is the characteristic of reality." That allows you to have a certain amount of attachment. As for the genuine basic substance of dharma, there isn't anything at all. By sweeping away all dharmas, one becomes separated from all characteristics. As was said above, "What is apart from all characteristics is Dharma." To be apart from all mundane marks is Dharma. But most people cannot separate themselves from those characteristics. And since they cannot leave those characteristics, they do not obtain all dharmas.

"I can be separate from characteristics," you say. "I don't attach myself to anything."

You aren't attached to anything? There was an earthquake a while ago; were you afraid? I believe there were quite a few people who were very agitated when that earthquake came. That is just because you cannot be apart from characteristics. If you can be apart from characteristics, Mt. T'ai could come crashing down before you and you would not be startled. People who can turn things around are not frightened by any state they meet. If you aren't frightened, then there aren't any states. Why do states exist? Why are there demonic obstructions? Why can demons come and disturb your samadhi? Because you move. As soon as you move they slip right in. If you don't move, no demon in existence will have any way to get at you. There won't be any mantra they can recite to move you.

You say, "Then why was Matangi able to recite a mantra and confuse Ananda in this sutra?"

It was just because he didn't have any samadhi. If he'd had samadhi, if Ananda had had the genuine Shurangama Samadhi,

there would have been no need for the Buddha to speak the *Shurangama Sutra* or the Shurangama Mantra. And you and I would not be able to listen to the *Shurangama Sutra* now or study the Shurangama mantra. So those were the causes and conditions. But if someone has samadhi, no matter what state arises, he or she will not be frightened.

"Now I will teach you. I will instruct you, Ananda. **You should consider it well."** This "considering well" does not refer to the kind of consideration Ananda has been using and speaking about. The word is the same, but it is not meant in the same way. Here "consider" means that he should use his true mind to contemplate and investigate. It isn't that he should use his conscious mind that makes distinctions.

"And do not become weary or negligent on the wonderful road to Bodhi. Don't be lazy and slack off. Don't be insolent or perfunctory about it. Don't be muddled about the wonderful road to Bodhi. You should be particularly attentive and especially aware that this is the path to wonderful enlightenment. It is the way to become a Buddha. It is the wonderful Shurangama Samadhi. If you have the wonderful Shurangama Samadhi, you can walk to the position of wonderful enlightenment, that is, the position of the fruition of Buddhahood." Buddhas are said to be wonderfully enlightened, and Bodhisattvas are said to be the ones of equal enlightenment; they are equal to wonderful enlightenment. Fifty-five positions lie between the level of Sound Hearer, through the levels of the Bodhisattvas, to the position of wonderful enlightenment. The fifty-five position will be explained later on in the *Shurangama Sutra*.

Chapter 2

The Two False Views

M2 The Buddha destroys the false and reveals the true.
N1 Ananda tells of his confusion and asks for instruction.

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, it is still not clear in my mind what the Buddha, the World Honored One, has explained for me and for others like me about causes and conditions, spontaneity, the characteristic of mixing and uniting, and the absence of mixing and uniting. And now to hear further that to see seeing is not seeing adds yet another layer of confusion.

Commentary:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, it is still not clear in my mind what the Buddha, the World Honored One, has explained for me and for others like me. Buddha, for the sake of me, a Sound Hearer, and for the sake of the Condition-Enlightened Ones, you have explained about **causes and conditions, spontaneity, the characteristic of mixing and uniting, and the absence of mixing and uniting –** characteristics which do not mix and unite. **It is still not clear in my mind.** Buddha, after hearing your explanation, we still have not become

enlightened. We haven't understood. Our minds still haven't opened to enlightenment. **And now to hear further that to see seeing is not seeing adds yet another layer of confusion."** Ananda is heckling the Buddha again. He says the expression of this kind of doctrine has caused him to add yet another layer of confusion, obscurity, and lack of understanding. He's like some people who have heard this much of the *Shurangama Sutra* and are still saying, "What is it talking about? I don't understand. I have listened for all these days, and the more of it I hear the less clear I become."

Sutra:

"Humbly, I hope that with your vast compassion you will bestow upon us the great wisdom-eye so as to show us the bright pure enlightened mind." After saying this he wept, made obeisance, and waited to receive the holy instruction.

Commentary:

"Humbly, I hope that with your vast compassion you. I kneel before the Buddha and hope that the Buddha will bring forth great compassion and **will bestow upon us the great wisdom-eye.** Give me the wisdom-eye, **so as to show us the bright pure enlightened mind**. Buddha, please explain the enlightened mind with its pure substance to us of the Two Vehicles, the Sound Hearers and the Condition-Enlightened Ones."

After saying this – at this point Ananda was really nervous. So when he'd finished speaking, what do you suppose he did? **He wept** and **made obeisance.** He cried. He resorted to the talents of a child and stood crying before the Buddha, and he bowed his head just like a child who is deprived of its milk and sees its mother and cries for a drink of milk. Requesting the Dharma is like asking for milk to drink. **And waited to receive the holy instruction.** He waited for Shakyamuni Buddha to give him some Dharma-milk to quell his hunger and confusion.

N2 The Buddha compassionately promises to explain.

Sutra:

Then the World Honored One, out of pity for Ananda and the great assembly, began to explain extensively the wonderful path of cultivation of all samadhis of the Great Dharani.

Commentary:

Ananda's weeping brought the Buddha out of samadhi. He came out of samadhi to explain to him the doctrine of the Way, the doctrine of wonderful samadhi. **Then the World Honored One, out of pity for Ananda:** "then" was when Ananda was famished and wanted milk to drink. It was when Ananda's confusion was so deep that he sought clarity. It was when Ananda wept and made obeisance. Basically the Buddha is endowed with a heart of great kindness and great compassion, so when Ananda cried the Buddha's compassionate heart was moved once again, and he wished to quickly speak Dharma for him. Since Ananda was his youngest cousin, it was likely that here the Buddha showed him a special fondness and protection. **And the great assembly:** However, he didn't do this just for Ananda's sake, but for the sake of everyone in the great assembly also. He **began to explain extensively –** "extensively" means that he categorized and made distinctions – as he explained **the wonderful path of cultivation of all samadhis of the Great Dharani**.

The Sanskrit word "dharani" refers to mantras; sometimes the word "mantra" will be used, and sometimes "dharani." When "dharani" is used, the meaning is "all-encompassing upholder." It encompasses all dharmas and upholds limitless meanings. That is, all dharmas are contained within the mantra, and the limitless wonderful meanings are produced from the mantra. This is one way to explain it. I have another way of explaining it. "All-encompassing" means holding the three karmas of body, mouth, and mind entirely encompassing them to make them pure. Precepts, samadhi, and wisdom, the three non-outflow studies, are upheld. Great Dharanis are not the same as small ones. A small one is just a little

mantra, and its effect is not as great. What is spoken of here is a great dharani.

"Samadhi" is concentration. "The wonderful path of cultivation": Ananda wants to cultivate the wonderful path to the dharmas of the samadhi of the great all-encompassing upholder. Now Shakyamuni Buddha is going to proclaim the genuine Dharma.

Sutra:

He said to Ananda, "Although you have a strong memory, it only benefits your wide learning. But your mind has not yet understood the subtle secret contemplation and illumination of shamatha. Listen attentively now as I explain it for you in detail.

Commentary:

The Buddha presents the topic. He tells him in advance what he is going to explain to him. **He said to Ananda, "Although you have a strong memory, it only benefits your wide learning.** Your memory is excellent, and you learn a great deal by the use of it. When things pass before your eyes, you do not forget them. But your power of memory can help only your learning, your ability to open wisdom through hearing.

"But your mind has not yet understood the subtle secret contemplation and illumination of shamatha." "Shamatha" is the doctrine of quietude. It has an unspeakably wonderful power of subtle secret contemplation and illumination. But your mind has not yet understood. You have not realized it in the least, you haven't the least bit of understanding. **"Listen attentively now as I explain it for you in detail.** You should pay particular attention now and listen to me while I explain to you bit by bit, point by point, layer by layer. Don't cry, Ananda. Be good and I will tell you now, I'll explain it for you. Don't be sad."

Sutra:

"And may this explanation cause all those of the future who have outflows to obtain the fruition of Bodhi.

Commentary:

"And may this explanation cause all those of the future who have outflows:" "Those of the future" includes us who are here now. We are now the "future" referred to then.

Everyone is said to have outflows before they are certified as having attained the fourth fruition of Arhatship. "Outflows" means every kind of fault. If, for example, someone likes to drink, he is said to have a "drinking-outflow." Those who like to smoke cigarettes have a "cigarette-outflow." Those who like to eat fine food have the outflow of eating fine food. Those who like to wear good clothes have the outflow of wearing good clothes. If these examples don't make it clear, then let me put it this way: in general, whatever you like most is an outflow.

You say, "What I like to do most now is meditate, so that must be a 'meditation-outflow.'"

That's different. Meditation directs you upward. When I said the things you like most, I meant things that send you downhill. If you like things which make you go down, they are outflows.

Outflows do not refer only to the things you have done in the past. If a thought stirs in your mind, and you say "I used to have that fault and now I have changed, but I still think about wanting to do it," that is an outflow. That's how fierce it is. All you have to do is let the thought stir in your mind, and you flow down. If you don't move your mind, you ascend upward.

Arhats of the first, second, and third fruitions cannot be said to have no outflows, but when one attains the fourth fruition of Arhatship, there are no more outflows.

Now the Buddha speaks of causing all those who have outflows **"to obtain the fruition of Bodhi."** How can the enlightened fruition of Bodhi be obtained? You need to have no outflows. If you have outflows, you cannot expect to obtain the enlightened fruition of Bodhi. Do you want to try things out? You have outflows because you have been trying things out from beginningless time

until now. So don't continue to be so confused. Don't act as if you hadn't even heard what I have said, thinking "The Dharma Master probably wasn't referring to me. There are so many people here that he's undoubtedly talking about someone else. The little faults I have don't matter that much. I'm fond of that fault and I don't need to give it up just yet. Why? Because the Dharma Master is not talking about me. He's probably talking about someone else." But you shouldn't fool yourself. If you fool yourself, you will miss the opportunity to become a Buddha. From beginningless time onward, you have flowed through birth and death in this Saha World, getting born and dying, getting born and dying, roaming around and forgetting to return. That's really upside-down. Now that you have met the Buddhadharma, you should quickly resolve to be courageous and vigorous and wake up. Don't continue to roam around and forget to return.

N3 He explains in detail.
O1 He reveals Ananda's confusion.
P1 He describes two views.

Sutra:

"Ananda, all living beings turn on the wheel of rebirth in this world because of two upside-down discriminating false views. Wherever these views arise, revolution through the cycle of appropriate karma occurs.

Commentary:

As soon as you read this section of text, you should experience immediate terror. You should be shocked**. "Ananda, all living beings turn on the wheel of rebirth in this world."** The Buddha calls to Ananda and says, "All living beings of this world spin on the wheel of birth and death, flowing and twisting through births and deaths. They spin like the wheel of an automobile, sometimes being born in the heavens, sometimes entering the hells. Sometimes they become asuras, sometimes they are people. Sometimes they become animals. Sometimes they are hungry ghosts. The turning wheel of the six paths continually revolves without cease **because**

of two upside-down discriminating false views. The wheel is turned by two kinds of perversions which result when the conscious mind makes distinctions and gives rise to false views. These views stem from individual and collective karma. **“Wherever these views** arise – at any time or place that these false views come into being – **revolution through the cycle of appropriate karma occurs.”** Whatever is seen is false, there is nothing true. What is meant by “false views”? If we truly understood, the mountains, the rivers, the great earth, the houses, buildings, structures, and dwelling places would not exist.

“That presents a real problem, then, because if there isn’t anything at all, where am I going to live?” you say.

You still live in your house. Don’t worry.

“Wherever they arise, there is revolution through the cycle of appropriate karma.” You receive a fitting retribution for whatever karma you create – both individual and collective. If you do good, virtuous deeds, you get reborn in the heavens. If you commit crimes you fall into the hells. Whatever karma you create brings you an appropriate retribution which you must undergo. In whatever place you create a particular incident, you will undergo an appropriate retribution on the turning wheel

The Buddhadharma is very subtle and wonderful. Those who are within the Buddhadharma may not be aware of its advantages to them. And those who are outside the Buddhadharma may not be able to find out the bad points of being outside. But within Buddhism, every bit of good you do and every single offense you commit is accounted for, and the accounting is never wrong by even a hair’s breadth.

Buddhism is also completely free and equal. There is absolutely no prejudice. Why is it said to be so impartial? All living beings, including hungry ghosts and those in the hells, can become Buddhas if they resolve to cultivate the Buddha-Way. Even the worst people can eventually become Buddhas. Even the worst animals can eventually become Buddhas. Sects outside the Way say

that bad people are always bad and that there is no way to save them. But in the Ming Dynasty, a tiger bowed to Great Master Lien Ch'ih, became his disciple, and wanted to protect him. Wherever Great Master Lien Ch'ih went, the tiger followed him. No one was afraid of Great Master Lien Ch'ih, but when the tiger arrived on the scene, people kept their distance. They caught sight of the shadow and ran away, crying, "A tiger is coming!" and everyone ran for cover.

Monks beg: they ask people to give them food. Great Master Lien Ch'ih was no different. He also begged for his food, and when he didn't have any food to eat, he told the tiger disciple to go out begging.

"But everyone is afraid of tigers. Who would have dared make offerings to one?" you ask.

Your point is well-taken, but Great Master Lien Ch'ih had taught this tiger to be good and not to harm anyone. So after a long time, everyone came to know that the tiger was a genuinely good tiger, and no one was afraid of it. Besides that, Great Master Lien Ch'ih had taught it to enter the city walking backwards, and people weren't so afraid when the first thing they caught sight of was the tiger's tail rather than its head. What is more, all Great Master Lien Ch'ih's disciples recognized that their tiger Dharma-brother had come. The ones who had taken refuge before he did called him "little Dharma-brother tiger," and the ones who had taken refuge after he did called him "elder Dharma-brother tiger." And when he arrived, people fought to make offerings to him. This one gave three dollars. That one gave five dollars. Another gave eight dollars, and another ten dollars. By the time the tiger had finished his begging-round, there was enough to feed them for a whole year. So, although tigers are very evil, this one knew enough to take refuge with the Triple Jewel and protect it. He was not bad, and in the future he can become a Buddha. That is an example of how equal the Buddhadharma is.

The Buddhadharma is also very free. Your doing of good and evil is of your own making; no one puts any restrictions on you. No one says you absolutely must do good things and not bad things. All I can do is exhort you not to do bad things, but if you are determined to do them I can't make a jail exclusively for my disciples who don't listen to my teaching. There is no law like this in the Buddhadharma. There is no talk of putting people in jail to cause them to change their minds and reform.

Sutra:

"What are the two views? The first consists of the false view based on living beings' individual karma. The second consists of the false view based on living beings' collective share.

Commentary:

The two kinds of upside-down false views mentioned above cause all living beings to revolve in the turning wheel of the six paths. After they are born they die, and once they die they are reborn. Their births and deaths never cease. The cycle is never cut off. It is because these kinds of false views take control that people undergo birth and death.

"What are the two views? The first consists of the false view based on living beings' individual karma."

It can also be called the false views based on one's individual share, and the false views based on the collective share can also be called the false views based on collective karma. Individual karma is what makes you different from other people. It is your own particular private karma, not the same as anyone else's. "False views based on individual karma" means that you have your own particular opinions and activities, and so the karma you create is particular to you.

People's false views based on individual karma make them "display their differences and exhibit their peculiarities." "Display their differences" means they show themselves to be unlike other people. They always feel that they are not the same as the ordinary

lot. And the karma they create is special. How? Absolutely everyone wants to be “number one.” Everyone likes to be first. And this is because each person’s karma is different from everyone else’s. This too is a false view. To display differences and exhibit peculiarities are both instances of false views. They are instances of false thought, false deeds, and false behavior.

The individual karma which results is all created from false thoughts in the mind – false thoughts of great expectations for the self. The higher the better. People put on a special style, and individual karma is the result.

“The second consists of the false view based on living beings’ collective share.” The collective share is what is the same as everyone else’s. It can also be called “public karma,” which includes such things as natural disasters, drought and starvation, and man-made calamities. The heavens fall and the earth revolves, and innumerable people are killed, a hundred thousand or a million or even ten million people are all killed at once in a single place. That is “public karma.” “False views based on the collective share:” false thoughts create this kind of collective karma. Because living beings confuse things for themselves and recognize a thief as their son, they create the false views of the collective share, that is, collective karma.. It is false views created from false thinking. “Views” here does not necessarily mean what is seen, but refers to opinions. People’s opinions are shared collectively; everyone’s opinions are identical. Living beings’ false thinking creates this kind of false karma. And then they undergo a false retribution. It is said they give rise to delusions, create karma, and undergo a retribution. In the beginning they don’t understand, and that is why they create karma. Once they create the karma they must undergo the retribution.

I will tell you about a response resulting from collective karma. In China in the thirty-third year of the Republic (1944), there was a drought in the province of Honan. Not only was there no rain, but incalculable swarms of locusts came raining from the skies. Each

locust was about three or four inches long. They flew through the air and did nothing but eat the crops in the fields. They would swoop down and strip the fields of sprouts and shoots, no matter what kind of crops were growing. The locusts were fierce. They came in droves which covered the skies and blocked off the sun. People could catch a whole butterfly-net full with a single swipe, and they'd bring them home to eat. Because they didn't have any rice or any other food then, people ate the locusts. The locusts ate the crops, so the people ate the locusts.

For the most part, it is easy for a child's Buddha-eye to open, and at that time there were children who saw why there were so many locusts in the air. They saw that there was an old man in empty space with a long white beard, spitting the locusts out of his mouth. As his spit fell, it turned into locusts. There would be no way to estimate how many there were once they fell to the ground. They were more than a foot thick – not just at one place, but for a radius of several hundred miles. Wouldn't you say this was strange? This is truly an example of collective karma, of the false views from the collective share. The people caught the locusts and brought them home to cook them, but when they put them on the table to eat them, they turned into human excrement. The locusts turned into human excrement by themselves. They didn't wait to be eaten to turn into it. Wasn't that strange? No matter how hungry people are, they cannot eat their own excrement. That's what their karmic obstruction was like. That's how fierce it was. How could it not be false views? People fled from Honan to the western capital of Ch'ang An, a distance of more than 800 miles. And incalculable numbers of people died on the road every day from starvation. When people die of starvation, the hungrier they get the more they laugh. They died laughing on the road. So I say that dying of starvation is not bad.

That's what happened in China in the thirty-third year of the Republic. Not just one person, but many people told me about it. I didn't witness it personally, but many Dharma Masters related the story to me, ones who had been there at the time and endured that

hunger. I didn't ask whether they ate the locusts. So there is no need for you to ask me that question now.

P2 He defines each.
Q1 The false view of individual karma.
R1 He describes what is seen.

Sutra:

"What is meant by false views based on individual karma? Ananda, it is like a person in the world who has red cataracts on his eyes so that at night he alone sees around the lamp a circular reflection composed of layers of five colors.

Commentary:

Above I gave a very general explanation of the false views of individual karma and of the collective share. Now the Buddha is going to give a detailed explanation of the false views of individual karma. **"What is meant by false views based on individual karma? Ananda, it is like a person in the world,** like any person in the world**, who has red cataracts on his eyes.** A red film has grown over his eyes and covers them, **so that at night he alone sees around the lamp a circular reflection composed of layers of five colors."** Individual karma is special and makes people different from other people. Because the person in the Buddha's example wanted to display his differences and exhibit his peculiarities, he has obtained a karmic retribution which is not the same as others'. There is a saying, "All you do is spend your strength at the threshold of a 'reflection of light.'" This person's eyes are diseased, and so when he looks at the lamp, it changes; it produces a circular reflection. Around the lamp is a circle of iridescent light – yellow, red, white, black – it is complete with every color. "Layers" means there were not just five colors; there were ten thousand purples and a thousand reds, every color there is, even ones you have never seen before. Would you say these colors and the circular reflection are true or false?

For instance, there basically isn't any problem with people's eyes, and people proceed to create a problem. What problem? They

don't see things clearly. They give rise to an illusory seeing. They look at the wall and it transforms into colors – the five hues and the six colors – opalescent. How do I know this? I met a man once who may have been taking LSD or some other hallucinogen, I don't know, but there he was looking at a wall and laughing, "Haw, haw!" – a big guffaw that didn't stop.

"Why are you laughing like that?" I asked him.

"Look!" he said, "Different colors! Oh! Different colors!" Now wouldn't you say he was like the man with the red cataracts? Basically there was nothing wrong with his eyes, so he took some drug or other and turned himself upside-down so that when he looked at the wall it writhed with color. Basically it was just a wall. But he saw different colors. Would you say that was true or false? He thought it was true. Anyone who hadn't taken such a drug would think he was dreaming and talking in his sleep. There was nothing wrong with his eyes and he created this problem.

Now the Buddha explains this question in further detail.

R2 He looks into the question of it being individual.

Sutra:

"What do you think? Is the circle of light that appears around the lamp at night the lamp's colors, or is it the seeing's colors?

Commentary:

"What do you think? What is your opinion about this, Ananda? **Is the circle of light that appears around the lamp at night the lamp's colors, or is it the seeing's colors?** What about the appearance of that light, in layers of five colors: are the colors emitted from the lamp, or do they come forth from the seeing? Speak up, Ananda."

Sutra:

"Ananda, if it is the lamp's colors, why is it that someone without the disease does not see the same thing, and only the

one who is diseased sees the circular reflection? If it is the seeing's colors, then the seeing has already become colored; what, then, is the circular reflection the diseased person sees to be called?

Commentary:

Here the World Honored One asks Ananda another question. "Ananda, **if it is the lamp's colors –** if you say that the circular reflection which displays layers of the five colors is emitted by the lamp – **why is it that someone without the disease does hot see the same thing?**" "Someone without the disease" refers to the Buddha and all the great Bodhisattvas. Those who are diseased are living beings. The lamp represents true principle. When the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas look, they see true principle. When living beings look, they see a circular reflection. They can see the lamp, but around it there is still a circular reflection, composed of multiple layers of the five colors. This is what ordinary people and all living beings see.

The five colors represent the five skandhas: form, feeling, thought, activity, and consciousness.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Ananda, if the circular reflection is in itself a thing apart from the lamp, then it would be seen around the folding screen, the curtain, the table, and the mats. If it has nothing to do with the seeing, it should not be seen by the eyes. Why is it that the person with cataracts sees the circular reflections with his eyes?

Commentary:

"Moreover, Ananda, if the circular reflection is in itself a thing apart from the lamp: if the circular reflection of five colors is an entity separate from the lamp, then when the man glances around at other things in the room like **the folding screen, the curtain, the table, and the mats** then the reflection would be seen around them. But in fact he doesn't see anything around them. So is

the reflection really separate from the lamp? **If it has nothing to do with the seeing, it should not be seen by the eyes.** If you want to force the issue and say it is definitely a separate entity, it shouldn't have any connection with the eyes. **Why is it that the man with cataracts sees the circular reflections with his eyes?** His eyes, even though faulty and diseased, are the vehicle for his seeing the circular reflection. Since it is his diseased eyes which see it, how can you say the circular reflection is separate from seeing?

R3 He promises to explain the false cause.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that in fact the colors come from the lamp, and the diseased seeing brings about the reflection. Both the circular reflection and the faulty seeing are the result of the cataract. But that which sees the diseased film is not sick. Thus you should not say that it is the lamp or the seeing or that it is neither the lamp nor the seeing.

Commentary:

"Therefore, you should know – Ananda, you should look into this **– in fact the colors come from the lamp.** When a person with pure eyes looks at the lamp, he sees only the lamplight, he doesn't see the reflection. **The diseased seeing brings about the reflection.** So the reflection is because of the cataract on the man's eyes. The man's seeing is faulty and so it creates a false reflection around the lamp when he looks at it. Since "the colors come from the lamp", you can't say that the reflection is separate from the lamp or that it is merely from the eye. Since 'the diseased seeing brings about the reflection,' you can't say that the reflection is separate from the seeing or that it is merely from the lamp.

"Both the reflection and the seeing are the result of the cataract." The "seeing" referred to here is the faulty seeing. The lamp's reflection and the faulty seeing are both due to the diseased eye – the red cataract. **"But that which sees the diseased film is not sick."** "That which sees" in this case refers to the pure seeing,

the true sight – not the false, faulty seeing. This pure seeing which can see the cataract is like the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who can see living beings.

“Thus you should not say that it is the lamp or the seeing or that it is neither the lamp nor the seeing. You should not become attached here and try to fix things by insisting that it is the lamp or it is the seeing. Since the colors come from the lamp and the diseased eye creates the reflection, you can’t pinpoint one or the other of these as the sole cause. Once again, the colors come from the lamp so it is not that the lamp is not the cause. The reflection comes from the cataract on the seeing-eye, so it can’t be that the seeing is not involved.” The Buddha continues to be quite explicit in his compassionate explanation for Ananda.

R4 An analogy makes clear the reason.

Sutra:

“It is like a second moon often seen when one presses on one’s eye while looking up into the sky. It is neither substantial nor a reflection because it is an illusory vision caused by the pressure exerted on one’s eye. Hence, a wise person should not say that the second moon is a form or not a form. Nor is it correct to say that the illusory second moon is apart from the seeing or not apart from the seeing.

Commentary:

“It is like a second moon often seen when one presses on one’s eye while looking up into the sky. It is neither substantial nor a reflection because it is an illusory vision caused by the pressure exerted on one’s eye.” The “second moon” is analogous to the circular reflection seen by the person with cataracts. The second moon is not “substantial,” in the same way that the circular reflection is not created from the seeing alone. Nor is the second moon “a reflection” in the same way that the circular reflection is not just based on the lamp’s colors. “Pressure exerted on one’s eye” is analogous to the cataract on the person’s eye. You can try this out

yourself if you are not clear about what the analogy means. Take your finger and press it in the corner of your eye. The pressure will give you "double vision" and so you will see a "second moon."

"Hence, a wise person – if you use your wisdom to regard this, you **should not say that the second moon is a form or not a form. Nor is it correct to say that the illusory second moon is apart from the seeing or not apart from the seeing."** Basically what results from the pressure against the eye is false to begin with. To use it as basis for arguing further about what it is and what it is not is just adding falseness to falseness. Would a wise person do that?

R5 He shows how the analogy ties with the dharma.

Sutra:

"It is the same with the illusion created by the diseased eyes. You cannot say it is from the lamp or from the seeing: even less can it be said not to be from the lamp or the seeing.

Commentary:

"It is the same with the illusion created by the diseased eyes. The second moon is not real. It only exists because of the pressure on the eye. The circular reflection is not real. It only exists because of the cataract. They are both empty and false. **You cannot say it is from the lamp or from the seeing: even less can it be said not to be from the lamp or the seeing.** It originated from the cataract on the man's eye, so you can't say it comes from the lamp or from the seeing. But the circular reflection only appears around the lamp and is only seen when the man uses his eyes to look at it, so you can't say it is not from the lamp and not from the seeing. The circular reflection is totally illusory to begin with; why squabble about what it is and is not?"

Q2 False view of the collective share.
R1 He describes what is seen.

Sutra:

"What is meant by the false view of the collective share? Ananda, in Jambudvipa, besides the waters of the great seas, there is level land that forms some three thousand continents. East and west, throughout the entire expanse of the great continent, there are twenty-three hundred large countries. In the other, smaller continents in the seas there may be two or three hundred countries, or perhaps one or two, or perhaps thirty, forty, or fifty.

Commentary:

This section of text talks about the false view of the collective share. The false view of the individual share causes each person to see differently. The false view of the collective share is that everyone has the illusion of seeing the same thing at almost the same time. So a country is used by way of analogy.

"What is meant by the false view of the collective share? What is said to make up the false view of the collective share? Ananda, listen carefully. I will tell you. **In Jambudvipa,** in the southern continent, **besides the waters of the great seas, there is level land that forms some three thousand continents.** Outside the seas is the level land, which is divided into three thousand continents. **East and west, throughout the entire expanse of the great continent –** in the middle of these three thousand continents there is a great continent, and north, south, east, and west, to count them all up, **there are twenty-three hundred large countries. In the other, smaller continents in the seas –** in the small islands and small continents, **there may be two or three hundred countries, or perhaps one or two, or perhaps thirty, forty, or fifty.** It is not fixed how many there are."

Sutra:

"Ananda, suppose that among them there is one small continent where there are only two countries. The people of just one of the countries together experience evil conditions. On that small continent, all the people of that country see all kinds of inauspicious things: perhaps they see two suns, perhaps they see two moons with circles, or a dark haze, or girdle-ornaments around them; or comets, shooting stars, 'ears' on the sun or moon, rainbows, secondary rainbows, and various other evil signs.

Commentary:

The Buddha called to Ananda again**, "Ananda, suppose that among them there is one small continent where there are only two countries."** Suppose in Jambudvipa there is an island, a small continent, with only two countries on it. Now although these two countries are on the same island, there is a boundary between them, and the karmic retribution the inhabitants experience is not the same. **"The people of just one of the countries together experience evil conditions."** The people of one of the countries undergo a certain retribution all together, and they experience evil conditions. "Evil conditions" refers to inauspicious circumstances and many kinds of disasters and difficulties – great winds, for example, or heavy rains. Recently in America there were tornadoes that blew people off into space, killing several hundred in all. That is an example of an inauspicious circumstance. That's what is meant by an evil condition. You see, on that one continent, some people underwent the evil retribution, and some people did not. In the same way, people in San Francisco did not undergo the evil condition of the tornado; they did not experience that suffering. But in the Midwest, houses were blown into empty space, trees were uprooted and blown completely away, and there was flooding and fire. Such disasters are far too prevalent.

"On that small continent, all the people of that country see all kinds of inauspicious things."

What do they see?

Sometimes the trees will talk. They hear someone speaking, and it turns out to be a tree. There isn't a person in sight. That's an inauspicious event. Among supernatural events there are some very inauspicious things. **"Perhaps they see two suns."** Perhaps the people in the one country see two suns, which is an indication of a great change within the country, something inauspicious. Perhaps the leader of the country will die or will be assassinated by someone who wants to usurp the power. This is because:

The skies can't have two suns,
The people can't have two kings.

There can't be two suns in the sky. If you see two suns, that is inauspicious. Or perhaps this president will kill that president. "Perhaps they see two moons." No matter what country it is, there will be only one sun and one moon. But the people of this country see two moons appear. This also indicates that something inauspicious is in store for the country.

"With circles, or a dark haze, or girdle-ornaments around them:"

Circles around the moon indicates wind:
Dampness in the foundations indicates rain.

When the moon looks like it has water around it, as if it were soaking in water, there will be a windstorm. And when the foundations of the house are damp, it will rain. Circles indicate the presence of an evil energy surrounding the moon. Just looking at it makes one uncomfortable. It is very unusual. "A dark haze" refers to a black, very murky energy which covers the moon. The moonlight doesn't shine through it, and yet it is not a cloud.

"Girdle-ornaments" refers to a formation around the side of the sun or moon which looks like the ornaments worn by women around their waist. In general, the sun and moon can't be

surrounded by anything. If there is something there, it is not a good sign.

"Or comets, shooting stars:" The light of a comet extends over a great distance. During the reign of the First Emperor of the Ch'in Dynasty of China (255-206 BC) comets appeared quite often, and as a result the people experienced extreme distress and suffering during that period. Shooting stars, or meteors, also emit a long trail of light, though not as long as a comet's, but their appearance is brief. They are just like flickering flames; one is gone and then another appears; then that one disappears and yet another appears. The shooting stars dart through space, and sometimes they fall in showers, and celestial rocks fall out of the sky just like rain pouring down.

"'Ears' on the sun or moon." refers to times when it appears that the sun or moon has grown ears. **"Rainbows, secondary rainbows:"** some say that in the morning they are called "rainbows" and in the evening they are called "secondary rainbows." In general they are yin and yang. And they indicate that heaven and earth are out of balance. Nevertheless, if you can change, if the people of that country can change their minds, everything will be all right. **"And various other evil signs,"** means that not just the few mentioned here, but many others appeared as well, large ones and small ones.

If the country is flourishing, then every single thing is auspicious. If the country is on the decline, then every single thing is inauspicious. If one person has the reward of blessings, the rest of the people can follow along and borrow his light. If the people follow someone who lacks blessings, they will undergo suffering. Take a look at the country's leader, the country's president. If he has blessings, the people will follow him and have blessings as well. If he hasn't any blessings, the people will follow him and endure suffering. It can be said that the head of a country is responsible for every circumstance.

R2 Ultimately they are not real.

Sutra:

"Only the people in that country see them. The living beings in the other country from the first do not see or hear anything unusual.

Commentary:

These two countries on the same small continent should have the same karmic retribution, but in one of them, inauspicious signs indicating disaster and difficulty appear, and everyone in the entire country sees them. **"Only the people in that country see them. The living beings in the other country from the first do not see or hear anything unusual."** But in the other country on the small continent, all the people, all the beings there, do not see these states or hear these sounds. This is called the false view of the collective share. The power of the karma of the beings in the one country is similar, and so they have this false seeing. Those in the other country do not have the same karma, and so they don't have that false seeing.

P3 He compares the two to clarify the meaning.
Q1 General mention.

Sutra:

"Ananda, I will now go back and forth comparing these two matters for you, to make both of them clear.

Commentary:

Fearing that Ananda might not be attentive, the Buddha called to him once again. **"Ananda, I will now go back and forth comparing these two matters for you.** I will now compare the causes and conditions of these two matters, perhaps going backwards or perhaps forward, describing them to you together." "The two matters" are referring to the man with the diseased eyes seeing a circular reflection around the lamp, and the entire population of one country seeing all kinds of disasters and evil

conditions which were not seen by the people in the other country. "I will compare these various principles **to make both of them clear."**

Q2 Specific explanation.
R1 He describes individual karma.
S1 He brings out that what is able to discern objects is the cataract.

Sutra:

"Ananda, in the case of the living being's false view of individual karma by which he sees the appearance of a circular reflection around the lamp, the appearance seems to be real, but in the end, what is seen comes into being because of the cataracts on the eyes.

Commentary:

The Buddha called again to Ananda. **"Ananda, in the case of the living being's false view of individual karma:** the living being spoken of before had his own special individual karma which caused him to see states which in fact were not real. As we explained before, **he sees the appearance of a circular reflection around the lamp, the appearance seems to be real.** He sees a circular reflection around the lamp, as if it were the actual situation, **but in the end, what is seen comes into being because of the cataracts on the eyes**. But when you investigate this doctrine thoroughly, it turns out that the person who sees the circular reflection has cataracts on his eyes and that is why he sees the reflection."

S2 The dharmas which are discerned are brought up and categorized together.
T1 A general categorization.

Sutra:

"The cataracts are the result of the weariness of the seeing rather than the products of form. However, the essence of seeing which perceives the cataracts is free from all diseases and defects. For example, you now use your eyes to look at the mountains, the rivers, the countries, and all the living beings.

They are all brought about by the disease of your seeing contracted since time without beginning.

Commentary:

"The cataracts are the result of the weariness of the seeing. The eyes are diseased, and so within the seeing a false seeing arises. The false seeing is the weariness of the seeing. **Rather than the products of form.** It is not an actual external state. No actual appearance exists which creates the characteristic of the weariness of seeing. **However, the essence of seeing which perceives the cataracts is free from all diseases and defects.** What is more, seeing circular reflections around the lamp, and the disease of the eyes, have nothing to do with the fundamental seeing of the seeing-nature. It is not that the seeing-nature is diseased. It is the eye which is diseased.

"For example, you now use your eyes to look at the mountains, the rivers, the great earth, the houses, the buildings, the structures, the dwellings, **the countries, and all the living beings.** Ananda, take yourself as an example. All these things you see with your eyes **are all brought about by the disease of your seeing contracted since time without beginning."**

T2 His explanation accords with former passages.

Sutra:

"Seeing and the conditions of seeing seem to manifest what is before you. Originally my enlightenment is bright. The seeing and conditions arise from the cataracts. Realize that the seeing arises from the cataracts: the enlightened condition of the basically enlightened bright mind has no cataracts.

Commentary:

The first **seeing** refers to the category of seeing, that which is able to see. The second **seeing** refers to the category of appearances, that which is seen. The category of seeing, which is able to see, and the category of appearances, which are seen, **seem to manifest what is before you**. States manifest like the ones

described above, in the example of the man with the diseased eyes who saw circular reflections around a lamp, and the example of the people who had karmic obstructions and could see all kinds of inauspicious things in their country. The two examples are parallel. Just as people whose eyes are not diseased do not see the circular reflections around the lamp, so the people in the neighboring country do not see the inauspicious signs. The circular reflections and the inauspicious signs manifest as a result of karma. Karmic obstructions bring about these appearances. Living beings create karma and must undergo a retribution. **Originally my enlightenment is bright.** These appearances which arise because of karma basically do not have any connection with my originally enlightened nature. **The seeing and conditions arise from the cataracts.** Because the eyes are diseased, they see these kinds of sick things. **Realize that the seeing arises from the cataracts –** if you understand that the seeing is a result of the cataracts on the sick eyes, **the enlightened condition of the basically enlightened bright mind has no cataracts."** Originally one's own seeing-essence, one's own basically enlightened bright mind, one's wonderfully bright true mind, the seeing which can see the seeing, that enlightened nature, has no disease. It is without defects.

S3 Concludes that the seeing that perceives seeing is what is apart from confusion.
T1 He explains what is most superior.

Sutra:

"That which is aware of the faulty awareness is not diseased. It is the true perception of seeing. How can you continue to speak of feeling, hearing, knowing, and seeing?

Commentary:

"That which is aware of the faulty awareness is not diseased. It is the true perception of seeing." This is the same as the doctrine that "when your seeing sees your seeing, the seeing is not the seeing." Your awareness that the eyes are sick is not itself a defective awareness. It is your genuine awareness, the genuine seeing of your seeing-essence. Having a defective awareness is like

being in water and not seeing the water. A creature submerged in water does not notice the water. It is only when it is no longer in the water that it sees it as water. What is apart from the water and able to see it as water is the genuine basic enlightenment. The enlightened seeing, which is aware of the disease, is not the seeing that functions with a defect. Only when you are separate from the defect can you know of it. This is the real seeing. **"How can you continue to speak of feeling, hearing, knowing, and seeing?** Why do you still want to remain within those faculties and make distinctions and seek? This is the seeing. What other seeing are you looking for?"

T2 He describes what is before one's eyes.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you now see me and yourself and the world and all the ten kinds of living beings because of a disease in the seeing. What is aware of the disease is not diseased.

Commentary:

The false view of the people of one country – the false view of the collective share – and the individual person's false view of individual karma are equally empty and false. "**Therefore –** because of this doctrine **– you now see me**, Ananda," says the World Honored One. "You see me," referring to himself, "and yourself, your own body, **and the world**, all the forms and appearances in the world, **and all the ten kinds of living beings because of a disease in the seeing.**" There are actually twelve classes of living beings, but those lacking thought and lacking form are left out because they cannot be seen. "All these things are the empty and false defect of your seeing, the false views of individual karma and the collective share. It is our false views, our discriminating views, a problem which develops in the seeing. **What is aware of the disease is not diseased.** It is not that your true seeing, your originally enlightened bright mind, has a problem. The problem is with the false seeing, which arises in the false views of

your collective karma and which makes you see false characteristics.”

Sutra:

“The true essential seeing by nature has no disease. Therefore it is not what we normally call seeing.

Commentary:

“The true essential seeing by nature has no disease. Its seeing-essence has no problem. Its basic substance is without defects, so the eyes which see the circular reflection are not the seeing-essence. Since the seeing-essence doesn’t have any problem, **therefore it is not what we normally call seeing**. It not only has no problem it does not have anything at all.”

What’s it called, then? “Not seeing?”

No. There isn’t any seeing and there isn’t any not seeing. What’s being discussed here? It is your inherent genuine-seeing essence, which comes from our inherent enlightened nature. It comes from the place of basic enlightenment. But “basic enlightenment” is also a name, and basically there isn’t even a name. If you give it a name, you are adding a head on top of a head again. If you call it basic enlightenment, you’ve already said too much.

R2 He explains in detail the similar share.
S1 He brings up the subjective similarity.

Sutra:

“Ananda, let us compare the false views of those living beings’ collective share with the false views of the individual karma of one person.

Commentary:

“**Ananda**, why do I say that it is all simply the manifestations of the false views of living beings? I will tell you. **Let us compare the false views of those living beings’ collective share with the false views of the individual karma of one person.**” They’re the same. The seeing that sees the circular reflection composed of multiple

layers of the five colors surrounding the lamp is the false view of individual karma. The false view of collective seeing is all the citizens of a country seeing the inauspicious signs. They see two suns, two moons, comets, shooting stars, rainbows and secondary rainbows, and all kinds of inauspicious astrological signs.

In China, in the past, every time there was a shift in dynastic rule, every time the dynasty or the emperor changed, these kinds of inauspicious things always appeared. Long ago in China an emperor who saw some inauspicious signs asked Ch'in T'ien Chien, an astrologer, what their meaning was. Ch'in T'ien Chien answered that they pointed to the death of the king. "But I have a way for you to pass off the calamity on the prime minister."

"That would not be permissible," said the emperor. "If I am meant to die, how can I put it off on the prime minister? The prime minister looks after important matters in the country. It would never do for him to die."

Ch'in T'ien Chien said, "Well if you don't want the prime minister to die in your place, you can have the people die in his place. It can be turned on the populace at large."

"The people are the foundation of the state," said the emperor. "If the people were to die, what meaning would my imperial reign have? That's also impermissible." He didn't want to do that, either.

Ch'in T'ien Chien said, "Then you can transfer the calamity to the year. This year the people will starve to death. That would also be possible."

"But that won't do, either." said the emperor. "I don't want to starve the people: It's meaningless to be that kind of an emperor."

So then Ch'in T'ien Chien bowed to the emperor. "You are truly a just emperor. With so much good in your heart, I am certain that you will not die. There has been an evil omen, but it can change and become auspicious." And the next day the evil omen disappeared. It is clear from this incident that although evil omens manifest, the evil can be transformed into something lucky. It all lies in a single

thought of people's minds. If in a single thought you change, then what might have been evil can turn into something auspicious. The practice of lighting incense and reciting the Buddha's name before something is about to happen is another method for bringing about a change. Calamities and blessings lie in a single thought to change. Lao Tze said:

If the mind brings forth good,
that good affects what has not yet happened
and turns it into something auspicious.
If the mind brings forth evil,
that evil affects what has not yet happened
and turns it into something horrendous.

In this connection, there are auspicious spirits and evil spirits. You should not think that all spirits are good. The business of evil spirits is repayment in kind. They punish whoever does something wrong. Good spirits protect people who do good. Each spirit has its responsibilities. So the changing of a single thought is extremely important. The fact that that emperor could take responsibility for his own death, and not have the prime minister or the people stand in for him or cause the year to be a bad one, allowed him to encounter the evil and turn it into good. So these matters are all subject to change. They are certainly not fixed.

I am reminded of Yuan Liao Fan, originally called Yuan Hsiao Hai, who was an official of the Ming dynasty. After he finished school, his father told him to study to be a doctor, because doctors can save people's lives as well as make a good living. After he began studying medicine, he met an old man named K'ung, who had a long beard, and who was skilled in physiognomy and divination. When he saw Yuan Hsiao Hai, he said, "You should go to school: You are an official."

Yuan Hsiao Hai said, "But my father, mother, and family all want me to be a doctor."

"Don't study medicine," was the reply. "You can go to school, and in such and such a year you will achieve such and such a rank in the imperial examination, and in such and such a year you will become a high-ranking official. Then in such and such a year, on such and such a day, you will become a magistrate, and you will become well known. Then, when you are fifty-four, on the fourteenth day of the eighth month, at midnight, your life will come to an end. You will have no sons." Not only did the old man date the important events of Yuan Hsiao Hai's life, he even calculated the day of his death.

After the divination, Yuan Hsiao Hai did go to school, and it turned out that the divination was unbelievably accurate. The rank he achieved in the imperial examination was exactly what old K'ung had predicted. The divination didn't miss by the breadth of a hair. In fact, it was so accurate that Yuan Hsiao Hai didn't even read any longer. What did he do? He waited. He sat there and waited for the bread to come to him. There's a well-known saying in China: "You just sit on the bed and wait for the salt cakes to fall," which means one doesn't do anything at all. One just waits for nature to take its course, waits for one's destiny to unfold. That's also a mistake. That's the way Yuan Hsiao Hai was then. He didn't do anything at all. He didn't even read. He thought, whatever my fate is to be, I will certainly not fail to receive it. I don't have to study anything. I don't have to seek anything. It will certainly come on its own.

So he roamed in the mountains and played in the water and traveled all over on a grand holiday. He took a long-term vacation and didn't do a thing. Eventually his travels led him to Nan Ching to Ch'i Sha Mountain, where he heard that Dhyana Master Yuan Ku resided. So he went there to see him. Dhyana Master Yuan Ku handed him a round cushion, and the two of them sat in meditation. They sat facing each other for three days and neither of them moved. Dhyana Master Yuan Ku was very surprised.

"Oh," he said. "Where do you come from? You are a vessel especially endowed with the Way. You've sat for three days without having to shift your legs or move at all."

Yuan Hsiao Hai replied, "I know that everything is predetermined, so I hope for nothing. That's why I don't have any false thoughts when I sit here, and so I don't feel any pain in my legs."

Where does the pain in your legs come from? It comes from your false thoughts, that is, the false views which this sutra discusses. Because of false views, your legs ache. If you haven't any false views, if you have true views, your legs will not hurt. Yuan Hsiao Hai said that since he didn't have any greed and didn't seek for anything, he didn't have any false thinking, and so when he sat it was not necessary to move.

Dhyana Master Yuan Ku said, "I'd thought you were an extraordinary person. But as it turns out, you're just an ordinary person.

That upset Yuan Hsiao Hai. "Why do you say I am an ordinary person?" Everyone wants to come out on top, and Yuan Hsiao Hai didn't want to finish second, either. As soon as he was called an ordinary person, he was unhappy.

Dhyana Master Yuan Ku said to him, "If you weren't an ordinary person, you wouldn't have been tied down by your fate for the last several decades. You are bound up by your destiny and haven't transcended it in the least."

Yuan Hsiao Hai said, "Can one transcend fate? Is it possible not to be bound by one's destiny?"

Dhyana Master Yuan Ku said, "You're a scholar. Doesn't the I-Ching say, 'Bring out the auspicious and avoid the evil'?" That's what the emperor I just told you about did. He brought out the auspicious and avoided the evil.

After that Yuan Hsiao Hai changed his name to Yuan Liao Fan, "putting an end to the ordinary." "I'm not an ordinary person," he said. "I have finished with being an ordinary person." And after that the earlier divination no longer came true. It was said that he would

die at fifty-four, on the fourteenth day of the eighth month, but he didn't die then. His horoscope said he would have no sons, but he had two. He lived to be over eighty. So one's fate is not fixed. And the auspicious and inauspicious are not fixed, either. All you have to do is do good, for as soon as you change your mind everything changes. Why are things inauspicious? Because your mind has inauspiciousness in it. That is why you encounter inauspicious circumstances. This proves that false views give rise to false causes and conditions. If your views are true, the false causes and conditions disappear.

Sutra:

"The individual person with the diseased eyes is the same as the people of that one country. He sees circular reflections erroneously brought about by a disease of the seeing. The beings with a collective share see inauspicious things. In the midst of their karma of identical views arise pestilence and evils.

Commentary:

"The individual person with the diseased eyes is the same as the people of that one country. The one sick man and the population of that one country all have an empty false seeing. **He sees circular reflections erroneously brought about by a disease of the seeing."** The one man sees circular reflections, and all living beings of that country see all kinds of disasters and difficulties. It is all because of a defect that the empty falseness arises. **"The beings with a collective share see inauspicious things."** The multitude of people in that one country, with their collective share of karma see evil omens which are not seen at all in the neighboring country. **"In the midst of their karma of identical views arise pestilence and evils."** The karmic obstacles, the evil conditions bring about the pestilence and evils, because a lot of false views can accumulate and become plagues and misfortunes.

S2 He compares their objective similarities.

Sutra:

“Both are produced from a beginningless falsity in the seeing. It is the same in the three thousand continents of Jambudvipa, throughout the four great seas and in the Saha World and throughout the ten directions. All countries that have outflows and all living beings are the enlightened bright wonderful mind without outflows. Because of the false, diseased conditions that are seen, heard, felt, and known, they mix and unite in false birth, mix and unite in false death.

Commentary:

“The false view of individual karma and the false view of the collective share, these two different kinds of karmic responses spoken of above, are **both are produced from a beginningless falsity in the seeing.**” They all arise from ignorance, which from beginning-less time onward has given rise to an empty false seeing. That is how these states come into being. “Falsity in the seeing” is just the production of false views. Not to have any false views and to turn one’s back on the dust and unite with enlightenment, and get rid of false thinking, is just the true mind. Why is it that you have a true mind but cannot make use of it? Why can’t you be in control of things? It is because of false views.

“It is the same in the three thousand continents of Jambudvipa, throughout the four great seas. The one country and one person spoken of above are compared to Jambudvipa with its three thousand continents, and to and in **the Saha World –** the world known as “Able to Bear” – **throughout the ten directions. All countries that have outflows –** that is, all the countries in which the living beings have not ended birth and death – **and all living beings are the enlightened bright wonderful mind without outflows.”** They are all the seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing found within the enlightened bright wonderful mind without outflows. **“Because of the false, diseased conditions that are seen, heard, felt, and known, they mix and unite in false**

birth, mix and unite in false death.” All countries and living beings are the seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing of empty false conditions. When the multitude of conditions mix and unite, they are falsely born. When the multitude of conditions mix and unite, they falsely die.

S3 He concludes that ‘apart from seeing is just enlightenment’ is certification to the teaching.

Sutra:

“If you can leave far behind all conditions which mix and unite and those which do not mix and unite, then you can also extinguish and cast out the causes of birth and death, and obtain perfect Bodhi, the nature which is neither produced nor extinguished. It is the pure clear basic mind, the everlasting fundamental enlightenment.

Commentary:

Dependent retribution and proper retribution were discussed above. “Dependent retribution” refers to the mountains, the rivers, the great earth, to the houses, buildings, structures, and dwellings. “Proper retribution” refers to the human body. Dependent retribution undergoes production, dwelling, decay, and emptiness. Proper retribution undergoes birth, old age, sickness, and death.

What is meant by production, dwelling, decay, and emptiness?

In this world, one development and one decline are called one kalpa. When the human lifespan reaches its peak of 84,000 years, then every hundred years the average height decreases by one inch and the lifespan decreases by one year. This continues until the human lifespan reaches ten years; then it begins to increase again. Once again, every hundred years the lifespan increases by one year and the average height increases by one inch. When the lifespan has increased to 84,000 years, that is called one kalpa. A thousand kalpas make one small kalpa. Twenty small kalpas make a middle kalpa. Four middle kalpas make a great kalpa. It takes twenty small kalpas for this world to come into being. It dwells for twenty small

kalpas. It decays for twenty small kalpas and it is empty for twenty small kalpas. That is what is meant by production, dwelling, decay, and emptiness. The twenty small kalpas of production make one middle kalpa. The twenty small kalpas of dwelling make a middle kalpa. The twenty small kalpas of decay and the twenty small kalpas of emptiness each make one middle kalpa. So production, dwelling, decay, and emptiness take four middle kalpas, which together make one great kalpa.

In the proper retribution there is birth, old age, sickness, and death. People take twenty years to grow up. They dwell for twenty years, they are sick for twenty years, and during the last twenty years they are preparing to die.

There are two kinds of birth and death: share-section birth and death – the birth and death of the body – and change birth and death. The term "share-section" derives from the fact that each person has a certain share of years to live, and each person has a certain appearance. For example your height may be five feet six inches and mine may be five foot nine, while another person's height may be three feet. Every person has his own appearance. Ordinary people are subject to share-section birth and death.

Those of the two vehicles, the Shravakas and Condition-Enlightened Ones, have ended share-section birth and death, but they are still subject to change birth and death.

What is meant by "change birth and death"? Their thoughts flow on in continual succession. Thought after thought is born, thought after thought dies.

The cause of birth and death is ignorance, and its conditions are karmic activity. This cause, ignorance, and this condition, karmic activity, mix and unite, and there is birth and death. Thus the Buddha said, **"If you can leave far behind all conditions which mix and unite –** the mixing and uniting of the conditions of ignorance and the karmic activity **– and those which do not mix and unite –** and any connection with those which do not mix and unite **– then you can also extinguish and cast out the causes of**

birth and death. In that way you can extinguish and cast out share-section birth and death and continual change birth and death, **and obtain perfect Bodhi, the nature which is neither produced nor extinguished**. When the cause of birth and death is extinguished and cast out, you obtain the wonderful fruition of Nirvana, the perfection of Bodhi, whose nature is neither produced nor extinguished. **It is the pure clear basic mind, the everlasting fundamental enlightenment.** It is also the basic mind, and it is the fundamental enlightenment which dwells permanently and does not change: that is, the self-nature.

CHAPTER 3

Mixing and Uniting

O2 The Buddha explains what Ananda has not understood.
P1 He traces his former awakening and what he has not yet awakened to.

Sutra:

"Ananda, although you have already realized that the wonderfully bright basic enlightenment does not by nature come from causes and conditions and is not by nature spontaneous, you have not yet understood that the enlightened source is produced neither from mixing and uniting nor from a lack of mixing and uniting.

Commentary:

This passage is spoken to destroy the concept of mixing and uniting and of not mixing and uniting. Ananda still has doubts about it, so the Buddha expounds this doctrine once again. He says once again that the seeing-nature is just as it is.

He first reprimands Ananda: **"Ananda, although you have already realized that the wonderfully bright basic enlightenment does not by nature come from causes and conditions and is not by nature spontaneous –** Ananda, you understood this doctrine when it was explained before. The nature of wonderfully bright basic enlightenment does not belong to causes and

conditions, nor does it belong to spontaneity. But **you have not yet understood."** He reprimands him. "You still haven't understood **that the enlightened source is produced neither from mixing and uniting nor from a lack of mixing and uniting.** It does not come from not mixing and uniting, either. 'Mixing and uniting' means the mixing and uniting of ignorance and karmic consciousness. You may think it is produced from mixing and uniting or perhaps from a lack of mixing and uniting, but both ideas are incorrect."

The sect outside the Way which preaches spontaneity is called the "god-self" outside-the-Way sect. They have a self which is a god-self. What they think is this: outside of the categories of appearances (in the eighth consciousness) there is a category of seeing, which is what they refer to as the god-self. That changes it into the knowledge and views of a sect outside the Way. The outside-the-Way sect that preaches causes and conditions holds that there is no category of seeing beyond the categories of appearances. So they say that there is no self. There are only appearances, the division of appearances. There are also those who preach mixing and uniting. They say that when ignorance and karmic consciousness mix and unite, there is production and extinction. Characteristics that are subject to production and extinction and the nature which is not subject to production and extinction are all mixed up together. The two cannot be distinguished clearly. That is what they think, and so they preach mixing and uniting. Those who preach a lack of mixing and uniting think that the characteristics which are subject to production and extinction and the nature which is not subject to production and extinction are not the same and have nothing to do with one another. So they preach a lack of mixing and uniting. Those are the four kinds of ideas advocated by sects outside the Way. They are not the doctrines spoken by the Buddha. So now the Buddha, fearing that Ananda may be confused by these doctrines, explains the matter for him once again. He knows that Ananda still has doubts.

It is just when there is the false that the true is not separate from it. When there is the true, the false is still there. It is not absent. It is just like a hand, which has a back and a palm: although the palm and the back are two, they are both right there; all you have to do is flip your hand over. It is the same with the characteristics which are subject to production and extinction and the nature which is not subject to production and extinction; these two are also one. Just as affliction is Bodhi, and birth and death are Nirvana; it is the same kind of principle.

People who study the Buddhadharma should certainly investigate the *Shurangama Sutra* and gain a thorough understanding of it. The *Shurangama Sutra* is for bringing forth great wisdom. If you want to have right knowledge and right views and open great wisdom, you should certainly understand the *Shurangama Sutra*. The *Shurangama Sutra* breaks up the deviant and reveals the proper. It smashes all the heavenly demons and those of outside-the-Way sects and reveals the innate human capacity for right knowledge and right views. But when the Buddhadharma is just about to become extinct, the very first sutra to vanish will be the *Shurangama Sutra*. So if we wish to protect and maintain the proper Dharma, we should investigate the *Shurangama Sutra*, come to understand the *Shurangama Sutra*, and protect the *Shurangama Sutra*. When the Buddhadharma is about to become extinct, weird demons and strange ghosts will come in the world, people with deviant knowledge and deviant views. They will be wise to the ways of the world and will be endowed with powers of debate and keen intelligence. They will argue that the *Shurangama Sutra* is spurious – inauthentic – and will tell people not to believe it.

Why will they say the *Shurangama Sutra* is spurious?

Because the *Shurangama Sutra* tells about all their faults. It discusses their kinds of deviant knowledge and deviant views. If the *Shurangama Sutra* remains in the world, no one will believe their deviant views. If there is no *Shurangama Sutra*, then their

deviant knowledge and deviant views will succeed in confusing people. So they argue that the *Shurangama Sutra* is spurious. This is the appearance of a demon-king. Those who study the Buddhadharma should be particularly attentive to this point. They should be particularly careful not to be turned around by the deviant knowledge and deviant views of that demon-king. Do not allow him to change your thoughts and opinions.

Does anyone have an opinion?

Student: How does the *Lankavatara Sutra* compare to the *Shurangama Sutra*?

The Master: The *Lankavatara Sutra* discusses the doctrine of the Ch'an school. It is different from the *Shurangama Sutra*. The Patriarch Bodhidharma used the *Lankavatara Sutra* as a basis when he transmitted the Ch'an School to China. The *Shurangama Sutra* represents the genuine wisdom of the entirety of Buddhism.

Student: Is it possible for a Bodhisattva to appear in the form of a teacher of an outside-the-Way sect?

The Master: All dharmas are the Buddhadharma. None can be obtained. Do not be attached. If you are attached, it is not Buddhadharma. If you are not attached, it is the Buddhadharma. If you are attached, it is demonic dharma.

Student: Another translation of the *Shurangama Sutra* has been published. Is it basically correct? If not, what would you suggest that English-speaking people read?

The Master: We are in the process of translating the *Shurangama Sutra* now. As for the other translation you mention, it is correct in some places and incorrect in many other places. And it is not at all in accord with the basic intent of the sutra. For instance, the translator says that Westerners wouldn't like the Shurangama Mantra and that they would not study the mantra. That is a complete mistake. He omits the mantra from his translation.

But if there hadn't been any Shurangama Mantra in the *Shurangama Sutra*, then basically there wouldn't have been any

reason to speak the sutra. The importance of the *Shurangama Sutra* is just to praise the Shurangama Mantra. The translator took it upon himself to dispense with the mantra. That is in total discord with the purport of the Buddha's explanation of the *Shurangama Sutra*.

Student: I have heard it said about the *Lotus Sutra* that the Buddha spoke all the other sutras of the other periods, all the other teachings, only as expedient means, and that they were taught only to enable his disciples to know the *Lotus Sutra*, and that in the Dharma-ending Age all other sutras would lose their power. Only the *Lotus Sutra* would have real power.

The Master: Not bad. All sutras were spoken for the sake of the *Lotus Sutra*. But the *Lotus Sutra* was spoken in order to cause living beings to become Buddhas. The *Shurangama Sutra* is for opening wisdom. The *Lotus Sutra* is for realizing Buddhahood. The *Shurangama Sutra* is for breaking through all the heavenly demons and outside-the-Way sects. It can also be said that it is for the sake of the *Lotus Sutra* that the *Shurangama Sutra* breaks through all the heavenly demons and outside-the-Way sects – that it is to cause people to cultivate the *Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra*. One studies the *Dharma Flower* and cultivates the doors of practice explained in it in order to realize Buddhahood.

However, at the very last, when the Dharma is about to become extinct, it is not the *Lotus Sutra* that will remain alive in the world; it will be the *Amitabha Sutra*. In the end, when the Buddhadharma becomes extinct, only the *Amitabha Sutra* will remain, and after it remains in the world for one hundred years it too will vanish. Then only the one sentence, the great six-syllable name *Na Mwo A Mi To Fo* (Namo Amitabha Buddha) will remain.

P2 The Buddha's refutation: both mixing and uniting are false.
Q1 First refutation: the seeing-essence does not mix and unite.
R1 He brings up his false doubt.

Sutra:

"Ananda, now I will once again make use of the mundane objects before you to question you. You now hold that false

thoughts mix and unite with the causes and conditions of everything in the world, and you wonder whether certification to Bodhi might arise from mixing and uniting.

Commentary:

Since the Buddha had not dealt with one of the major theories propounded by those of outside-the-Way sects, he suspected his small disciple's mind might be wandering in that direction, so he says, **"Ananda, now I will once again make use of the mundane objects before you to question you. You now hold that false thoughts mix and unite with the causes and conditions of everything in the world, and you wonder whether certification to Bodhi might arise from mixing and uniting.** You keep bringing up the theories of those outside-the-Way and comparing them to my Dharma, so now I will make the comparison for you."

R2 The refutation.
S1 He refutes mixing.

Sutra:

"Accordingly, right now, does the wonderful pure seeing-essence mix with light, does it mix with darkness, does it mix with emptiness or does it mix with solid objects? If it mixes with light, look further at the light: what place there in the light before you is combined with the seeing? If you can distinguish the characteristic of seeing, what does it look like in combination?

Commentary:

The Buddha questions Ananda: **"Accordingly, right now, does the wonderful pure seeing-essence mix with light, does it mix with darkness, does it mix with emptiness or does it mix with solid objects?** As you are at present, does your subtle wonderful pure and clear seeing-essence mix with light or darkness, with emptiness or solid objects? Which does it mix with? **If it mixes with light, look further at the light: what place there in the light before you is combined with the seeing?** If you say it mixes

together with the light, then when you are looking at the light in front of you, tell me which part of it is the seeing? Point it out to me! Which place is mixed and united with the seeing? **If you can distinguish the characteristic of seeing, what does it look like in combination?** If it is possible for you to determine the form and appearance of your seeing, if you can recognize it, what form and appearance does it have when it is mixed together with the light? For instance, if you combine red and white, the result is neither red nor white. When you combine your seeing and light, what does the end-result look like?

Sutra:

"If it is not the seeing, how can you see the light? If it is the seeing, how can the seeing see itself?

Commentary:

"If it is not the seeing, how can you see the light? If it is the seeing, how can the seeing see itself? If you say you do see the light and that it is the seeing, then it must be that you are seeing your seeing. **How can the seeing see itself?** How can you do that? What's your method?"

Once again Ananda has to think over the doctrine.

Sutra:

"If it is certain that the seeing is complete, what room will there be for it to mix with the light? If the light is complete, it cannot unite and mix with the seeing.

Commentary:

"If it is certain that the seeing is complete, what room will there be for it to mix with the light? If you definitely know the seeing to be complete and not deficient, neither lacking nor in excess, how can you combine it with light? **If the light is complete, it cannot unite and mix with the seeing.** If you say the seeing is not complete but that the light is complete, the light should not combine with the seeing. If it is neither lacking nor in excess, it will not be able to admit other things."

Sutra:

"If seeing is different from light, then both the nature and the light lose their identity when they combine. Since the combination results in the loss of the light and the nature, it is meaningless to say it mixes with light. The same principle applies to its mixing with darkness, with emptiness, or with solid objects.

Commentary:

"If seeing is different from light, then both the nature and the light lose their identity when they combine." If you say that the seeing and the light are two different things, then it follows that they would lose their original characteristics if they were mixed together. The identity of the seeing-nature and the identity of the light – the basic nature of the light – would both be lost.

"Since the combination results in the loss of the light and the nature, it is meaningless to say it mixes with light. So I say that there is no such thing as the mixing and uniting of your seeing with the light. To say they do mix and unite has no basis in principle.

"The same principle applies to its mixing with darkness, with emptiness, or with solid objects. The doctrine that the seeing cannot mix with light can be applied to the proposition that it can mix with darkness, emptiness, or solid objects. It cannot mix with them. How can you say that certification to Bodhi arises from mixing and uniting? This is a mistake."

Earlier, Ananda had wondered whether the seeing is based on causes and conditions. The Buddha broke up this idea. Now he had decided that the seeing is a result of mixing and uniting. Step by step, the Buddha has broken up Ananda's confusion. As soon as the Buddha breaks up one kind of confusion, Ananda gets involved in another kind of confusion. He has still not found the genuine doctrine.

The Buddha said that all living beings have the Buddha-nature and that all can become Buddhas. Some people hear that and go

insane, and they say, “Ah, I am a Buddha. Everyone is a Buddha.” Why don’t they say that everyone is a demonic ghost? They say everyone is a Buddha. If everyone is a Buddha, then have you become a Buddha? The Buddha has three bodies, four kinds of wisdom, five eyes, and six spiritual penetrations. How many bodies do you have? The Buddha has the pure and clear Dharma-body, the perfect full Reward-body, and millions of transformation bodies. How many bodies do you have? The Buddha has the great perfect mirror-wisdom, the fair and impartial wisdom of the nature, the wonderful contemplating and investigating wisdom, and the wisdom that accomplishes what must be done – four kinds of wisdom. How much wisdom do you have? The Buddha has five eyes: the Buddha-eye, the Dharma-eye, the wisdom-eye, the flesh-eye, and the heavenly-eye. How many eyes do you have? You don’t have a single eye, you haven’t opened a single eye and yet you say, “Oh, I am Buddha.” What Buddha are you? Buddhas have names. What is the name of your Buddha?”

“I’m just Buddha,” you say.

If you don’t even have a name, what kind of Buddha are you? Buddhas have names, too, and there is no nameless Buddha. So, to go around saying, “Everybody is Buddha:” is to be someone who has gone insane.

Yes, everyone is indeed Buddha, but you must practice the Buddhadharma. After sitting for six years in the Himalayas under the Bodhi tree, he saw a star one evening and awakened to the Way. That is the work Shakyamuni Buddha did to become a Buddha. But you do as you please from morning till night. If you like to drink, you go out drinking. If you feel like smoking, you pull out a cigarette. If you are in the mood for a movie, you go see one, if you like dancing, you go dancing, and then you go home and accompany your wife to bed, and that’s a Buddha! That’s a realized Buddha! Ah, too easy! So take a look at how much distress and difficulty the Buddha endured to realize Buddhahood, and all you do all day is lie in bed and sit around the house. One need not speak

of six years in the Himalayas, you haven't even sat there for six days. If you could sit there in a state of unmoving suchness for six days, I would consider you a Buddha, but you haven't even sat for six hours, and yet you say of yourself that you have realized Buddhahood. How could that not be called upside-down? Ananda may be upside-down, but that viewpoint is even more upside-down than Ananda's. So I call such people demon-kings. From now on, when you meet people like that, you may also call them demon-kings.

S2 He refutes uniting.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Ananda, as you are right now, once again, does the wonderful pure seeing-essence unite with light, does it unite with darkness, does it unite with emptiness, or does it unite with solid objects?

Commentary:

Uniting is different from mixing. Mixing is when two kinds of things are blended together. Uniting is like when a lid is placed on a round pot. They unite and become one. So he says, **"Moreover,** I will explain yet another doctrine for you. **Ananda, as you are right now, once again, does the wonderful pure seeing-essence unite with light?** The substance of your seeing-essence is subtle, wonderful, clear, and pure: does it unite with light? **Does it unite with darkness**? **Does it unite with emptiness**? **Or does it unite with solid objects?"**

Sutra:

"If it unites with light, then when darkness comes the characteristic of light is extinguished, how will you be able to see darkness, since the seeing does not unite with darkness? If you do see darkness and yet at that time there is no union with darkness, but rather a union with light, then you would not have seen light. Since you would not have seen light, why is it

that, when there is union with light, you are able to know clearly that it is light and not darkness?

Commentary:

"If it unites with light – if you say the seeing and the characteristic of light are united, then **when darkness comes the characteristic of light is extinguished, how will you be able to see darkness, since the seeing does not unite with darkness?** When it gets dark, the characteristic of light disappears. Since the seeing is not united with darkness, why can it see darkness? **If you do see darkness and yet at that time there is no union with darkness:** if you say that when you see darkness, the seeing does not unite with darkness – although it does see darkness it is not united with it **– but rather a union with light, then you would not have seen light.** If you say the seeing is united with light, then it should not see light. That is, it you say it can see what it is not united with – in this case darkness – then it should not see what it is united with – that is, light. **Since you would not have seen light, why is it that, when there is union with light, you are able to know clearly that it is light and not darkness?** You can see light and understand perfectly well that it is not darkness. According to your argument, then, you should not see light, but that is actually not the case, since you are able to distinguish the difference between brightness and darkness. In the last analysis, then, would you say that the seeing is united with light or united with darkness?"

Sutra:

"The same is true of its union with darkness, with emptiness, or with solid objects."

Commentary:

"The same is true of its union with darkness, with emptiness, or with solid objects." The very same principle applies to the possibility of the seeing uniting with darkness, with emptiness, or with solid objects.

You cannot say that the seeing unites with any characteristic at all. But you also cannot say that it does not unite with any characteristic. The fact is that light and darkness are subject to production and extinction, while the seeing-essence is neither produced nor destroyed. What is neither produced nor destroyed cannot be united with what is produced and destroyed. Ananda didn't understand this doctrine, and so the Thus Come One used the greatly compassionate expedient device of speaking all kinds of examples to instruct him.

Q2 He refutes that it is not mixed and united.
R1 Based on the teaching, Ananda gives rise to a doubt.

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, as I consider it, the source of this wonderful enlightenment does not mix or unite with any conditioned mundane object or with the mind's speculation. Is that the case?"

Commentary:

Having heard the Buddha's explanation, Ananda had another doubt. He once again thought about it and considered it. **Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, as I consider it, the source of this wonderful enlightenment –** this refers to the seeing-nature – **does not mix or unite with any conditioned mundane object.** It does not unite with the wearisome dust, which is based on causes and conditions, **or with the mind's speculation. Is that the case?"** He asks, "Are all these various things in fact not united?" His asking shows that he is not speaking decidedly. Before this, what he said was very decisive. He said that the seeing is spontaneity, that it is causes and conditions, and he mentioned various other doctrines. He spoke with absolute confidence then, but his theories did not stand up; all of his ideas were smashed by Shakyamuni Buddha. So now he's learned how to be slippery. When he says things, he doesn't speak with any finality. "Is it that they do not mix and unite?" He takes a questioning tone. "I think the doctrine works this way, but maybe it's not this way?"

R2 The specific refutation.
S1 He refutes not mixing.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "Now you say further that the enlightened nature is neither mixed nor united. So now I ask you further: as to this wonderful seeing-essence's neither mixing nor uniting, does it not mix with light? Does it not mix with darkness? Does it not mix with emptiness? Does it not mix with solid objects?

Commentary:

The seeing-nature is neither produced nor extinguished. Ananda is trying to compare what is neither produced nor extinguished with what is produced and extinguished. He wants to compare it to light and darkness, to emptiness and solid objects, to the causal mundane conditions, and to the mind's thoughts. He keeps trying to combine it with them. Now he's thought some more, and he says, "Is it the case that it does not mix and unite?" In reply, **the Buddha said, "Now you say further that the enlightened nature is neither mixed nor united.** You said before that the enlightened seeing is mixed and united. **So now I ask you further –** I'll ask you something else now. **As to this wonderful seeing-essence's neither mixing nor uniting:** you say that the subtle, wonderful seeing-essence which is not produced and not extinguished neither mixes nor unites. But **does it not mix with light? Does it not mix with darkness? Does it not mix with emptiness? Does it not mix with solid objects?** Speak up."

Sutra:

"If it does not mix with light, then between seeing and light there must be a boundary.

Commentary:

If you want to say that it does not mix with light, then your seeing-essence and the characteristic of light must certainly have boundaries. What is the boundary of your seeing? What is the boundary of the characteristic of light? If you say it does not mix

with light, then find the boundary between them. What indication is there of a division between them?

Sutra:

“Examine it further: what place is light? What place is seeing? Where are the boundaries of the seeing and the light?

Commentary:

“Examine it further: look into it. **What place is light?** Where does the light end? **What place is seeing?** Where does the seeing end? **Where are the boundaries of the seeing and the light?** Tell me, where is the boundary-line which divides them?”

Sutra:

“Ananda, if there is no seeing within the boundaries of light, then there is no contact between them, and clearly one would not know where the characteristic of light is. Then how could its boundaries be realized?

Commentary:

“Ananda, if there is no seeing within the boundaries of light – if within the characteristic of light there is indeed no seeing-essence, **then there is no contact between them.** Light and seeing could not bump into one another. The two would never meet. **And clearly one would not know where the characteristic of light is.** Since the two cannot come in contact, it’s quite evident that one could not know where the characteristic of light is. **How could its boundaries be realized?** If you don’t even know where its characteristic is, how can any boundary be drawn?”

Sutra:

“As to its not mixing with darkness, with emptiness, or with solid objects, the principle is the same.

Commentary:

The doctrine is the same for darkness, for emptiness, and for solid objects. Now you divide them for me. You say they do not mix; where is the boundary of their not mixing. Speak up.

S2 He refutes not uniting.

Sutra:

"Moreover, as to the wonderful seeing essence's neither mixing nor uniting, does it not unite with light? Does it not unite with darkness? Does it not unite with emptiness? Does it not unite with solid objects?

Commentary:

Above, mixing was discussed: now, uniting will be discussed. **"Moreover, as to the wonderful seeing essence's neither mixing nor uniting:** you say that the subtle wonderful seeing-essence does not mix or unite. But **does it not unite with light? Does it not unite with darkness? Does it not unite with emptiness? Does it not unite with solid objects?"**

Sutra:

"If it does not unite with light, then the seeing and the light are at odds with each other by nature, as are the ear and the light, which do not come in contact.

Commentary:

"If it does not unite with light, then the seeing and the light are at odds with each other by nature." If the seeing is not united with the characteristic of light, then they are opposed to one another. Since they do not unite, they go so far as to be in discord and mutual opposition**. "As are the ear and the light, which do not come in contact."** It would be like the ear. If you look you can see light, but if you cover your eyes, your ears don't know if it is light or dark. The ear does not distinguish brightness and darkness. Light and the hearing-nature of the ear do not come in contact.

Sutra:

"Since the seeing does not know where the characteristic of light is, how can it determine clearly whether there is union?

Commentary:

It can't see the characteristic of light because it can't unite with it, so how can it distinguish, how can it discern the presence or absence of light?

Sutra:

"As to its not uniting with darkness, with emptiness, or with solid objects, the principle is the same.

Commentary:

The doctrine of whether the seeing unites with darkness, with emptiness, or with solid objects is the same.

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When Buddhism first came to China from India, one of the most important tasks required for its establishment was the translation of the Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Chinese. This work involved a great many people, such as the renowned monk National Master Kumarajiva (fifth century), who led an assembly of over 800 people to work on the translation of the Tripitaka (Buddhist canon) for over a decade. Because of the work of individuals such as these, nearly the entire Buddhist Tripitaka of over a thousand texts exists to the present day in Chinese.

Now the banner of the Buddha's Teachings is being firmly planted in Western soil, and the same translation work is being done from Chinese into English. Since 1970, the Buddhist Text Translation Society (BTTS) has been making a paramount contribution toward this goal. Aware that the Buddhist Tripitaka is a work of such magnitude that its translation could never be entrusted to a single person, the BTTS, emulating the translation assemblies of ancient times, does not publish a work until it has passed through four committees for primary translation, revision, editing, and certification. The leaders of these committees are Bhikshus (monks) and Bhikshunis (nuns) who have devoted their lives to the study and practice of the Buddha's teachings. For this reason, all of the works of the BTTS put an emphasis on what the principles of the Buddha's teachings mean in terms of actual practice and not simply hypothetical conjecture.

The translations of canonical works by the Buddhist Text Translation Society are accompanied by extensive commentaries by the Venerable Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua.

BTTS Publications

Buddhist Sutras. Amitabha Sutra, Dharma Flower (Lotus) Sutra, Flower Adornment (Avatamsaka) Sutra, Heart Sutra & Verses without a Stand, Shurangama Sutra, Sixth Patriarch Sutra, Sutra in Forty-two Sections, Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva, Vajra Prajna Paramita (Diamond) Sutra.

Commentarial Literature. Buddha Root Farm, City of 10000 Buddhas Recitation Handbook, Filiality: The Human Source, Herein Lies the Treasure-trove, Listen to Yourself Think Everything Over, Shastra on the Door to Understanding the Hundred Dharmas, Song of Enlightenment, The Ten Dharma Realms Are Not beyond a Single Thought, Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma, Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma during the 1993 Trip to Taiwan, Water Mirror Reflecting Heaven.

Biographical. In Memory of the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua, Pictorial Biography of the Venerable Master Hsü Yün, Records of High Sanghans, Records of the Life of the Venerable Master Hsüan Hua, Three Steps One Bow, World Peace Gathering, News from True Cultivators, Open Your Eyes Take a Look at the World, With One Heart Bowing to the City of 10000 Buddhas.

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Musics, Novels and Brochures. Songs for Awakening, Awakening, The Three Cart Patriarch, City of 10000 Buddhas Color Brochure, Celebrisi's Journey, Heng Ch'au's Journal.

The Buddhist Monthly–Vajra Bodhi Sea is a monthly journal of orthodox Buddhism which has been published by the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, formerly known as the Sino-American Buddhist Association, since 1970. Each issue contains the most recent translations of the Buddhist canon by the Buddhist Text Translation Society. Also included in each issue are a biography of a great Patriarch of Buddhism from the ancient past, sketches of the lives of contemporary monastics and lay-followers around the world, articles on practice, and other material. The journal is bilingual, Chinese and English

Please visit our web-site at **`www.bttsonline.org`** for the latest publications and for ordering information.

The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association

Mission

The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association (formerly the Sino-American Buddhist Association) was founded by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua in the United States of America in 1959. Taking the Dharma Realm as its scope, the Association aims to disseminate the genuine teachings of the Buddha throughout the world. The Association is dedicated to translating the Buddhist canon, propagating the Orthodox Dharma, promoting ethical education, and bringing benefit and happiness to all beings. Its hope is that individuals, families, the society, the nation, and the entire world will, under the transforming influence of the Buddhadharma, gradually reach the state of ultimate truth and goodness.

The Founder

The Venerable Master, whose names were An Tse and To Lun, received the Dharma name Hsuan Hua and the transmission of Dharma from Venerable Master Hsu Yun in the lineage of the Wei Yang Sect. He was born in Manchuria, China, at the beginning of the century. At nineteen, he entered the monastic order and dwelt in a hut by his mother's grave to practice filial piety. He meditated, studied the teachings, ate only one meal a day, and slept sitting up. In 1948 he went to Hong Kong, where he established the Buddhist Lecture Hall and other Way-places. In 1962 he brought the Proper Dharma to the West, lecturing on several dozen Mahayana Sutras in the United States. Over the years, the Master established more than twenty monasteries of Proper Dharma under the auspices of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association and the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. He also founded centers for the translation of the Buddhist canon and for education to spread the influence of the Dharma in the East and West. The Master manifested the stillness in the United States in 1995. Through his lifelong, selfless dedication to teaching living beings with wisdom and compassion, he influenced countless people to change their faults and to walk upon the pure, bright path to enlightenment.

Dharma Propagation, Buddhist Text Translation, and Education

The Venerable Master Hua's three great vows after leaving the home-life were (1) to propagate the Dharma, (2) to translate the Buddhist Canon, and (3) to promote education. In order to make these vows a reality, the Venerable Master based himself on the Three Principles and the Six Guidelines. Courageously facing every hardship, he founded monasteries, schools, and centers in the West, drawing in living beings and teaching them on a vast scale. Over the years, he founded the following institutions:

The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas and Its Branches

In propagating the Proper Dharma, the Venerable Master not only trained people but also founded Way-places where the Dharma wheel could turn and living beings could be saved. He wanted to provide cultivators with pure places to practice in accord with the Buddha's regulations. Over the years, he founded many Way-places of Proper Dharma. In the United States and Canada, these include the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas; Gold Mountain Monastery; Gold Sage Monastery; Gold Wheel Monastery; Gold Summit Monastery; Gold Buddha Monastery; Avatamsaka Monastery; Long Beach Monastery; the City of the Dharma Realm; Berkeley Buddhist Monastery; Avatamsaka Hermitage; and Blessings, Prosperity, and Longevity Monastery. In Taiwan, there are the Dharma Realm Buddhist Books Distribution Association, Dharma Realm Monastery, and Amitabha Monastery. In Malaysia, there are Zi Yun Dong Monastery, Deng Bi An Monastery, and Lotus Vihara. In Hong Kong, there are the Buddhist Lecture Hall and Cixing Monastery.

Purchased in 1974, the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is the hub of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association. The City is located in Talmage, Mendocino County, California, 110 miles north of San Francisco. Eighty of the 488 acres of land are in active use. The remaining acreage consists of meadows, orchards, and woods. With over seventy large buildings containing over 2,000 rooms, blessed with serenity and fresh, clean air, it is the first large Buddhist monastic community in the United States. It is also an international center for the Proper Dharma.

Although the Venerable Master Hua was the Ninth Patriarch in the Weiyang Sect of the Chan School, the monasteries he founded emphasize all of the five main practices of Mahayana Buddhism (Chan meditation, Pure Land,

esoteric, Vinaya (moral discipline), and doctrinal studies). This accords with the Buddha's words: "The Dharma is level and equal, with no high or low." At the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, the rules of purity are rigorously observed. Residents of the City strive to regulate their own conduct and to cultivate with vigor. Taking refuge in the Proper Dharma, they lead pure and selfless lives, and attain peace in body and mind. The Sutras are expounded and the Dharma wheel is turned daily. Residents dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to making Buddhism flourish. Monks and nuns in all the monasteries take one meal a day, always wear their precept sash, and follow the Three Principles:

Freezing, we do not scheme.
Starving, we do not beg.
Dying of poverty, we ask for nothing.
According with conditions, we do not change.
Not changing, we accord with conditions.
We adhere firmly to our three great principles.
We renounce our lives to do the Buddha's work.
We take the responsibility to mold our own destinies.
We rectify our lives to fulfill the Sanghan's role.
Encountering specific matters,
we understand the principles.
Understanding the principles,
we apply them in specific matters.
We carry on the single pulse of
the Patriarchs' mind-transmission.

The monasteries also follow the Six Guidelines: not contending, not being greedy, not seeking, not being selfish, not pursuing personal advantage, and not lying.

International Translation Institute

The Venerable Master vowed to translate the Buddhist Canon (Tripitaka) into Western languages so that it would be widely accessible throughout the world. In 1973, he founded the International Translation Institute on Washington Street in San Francisco for the purpose of translating Buddhist scriptures into English and other languages. In 1977, the Institute was merged into Dharma Realm Buddhist University as the Institute for the Translation of Buddhist Texts. In 1991, the Venerable Master purchased a large building in

Burlingame (south of San Francisco) and established the International Translation Institute there for the purpose of translating and publishing Buddhist texts. To date, in addition to publishing over one hundred volumes of Buddhist texts in Chinese, the Association has published more than one hundred volumes of English, French, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Japanese translations of Buddhist texts, as well as bilingual (Chinese and English) editions. Audio and video tapes also continue to be produced. The monthly journal Vajra Bodhi Sea, which has been in circulation for nearly thirty years, has been published in bilingual (Chinese and English) format in recent years.

In the past, the difficult and vast mission of translating the Buddhist canon in China was sponsored and supported by the emperors and kings themselves. In our time, the Venerable Master encouraged his disciples to cooperatively shoulder this heavy responsibility, producing books and audio tapes and using the medium of language to turn the wheel of Proper Dharma and do the great work of the Buddha. All those who aspire to devote themselves to this work of sages should uphold the Eight Guidelines of the International Translation Institute:

1. One must free oneself from the motives of personal fame and profit.
2. One must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.
3. One must refrain from aggrandizing one's work and denigrating that of others.
4. One must not establish oneself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with one's fault-finding.
5. One must take the Buddha-mind as one's own mind.
6. One must use the wisdom of Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles.
7. One must request Virtuous Elders of the ten directions to certify one's translations.
8. One must endeavor to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

These are the Venerable Master's vows, and participants in the work of translation should strive to realize them.

Instilling Goodness Elementary School, Developing Virtue Secondary School, Dharma Realm Buddhist University

"Education is the best national defense." The Venerable Master Hua saw clearly that in order to save the world, it is essential to promote good education. If we want to save the world, we have to bring about a complete change in people's minds and guide them to cast out unwholesomeness and to pursue goodness. To this end the Master founded Instilling Goodness Elementary School in 1974, and Developing Virtue Secondary School and Dharma Realm Buddhist University in 1976.

In an education embodying the spirit of Buddhism, the elementary school teaches students to be filial to parents, the secondary school teaches students to be good citizens, and the university teaches such virtues as humaneness and righteousness. Instilling Goodness Elementary School and Developing Virtue Secondary School combine the best of contemporary and traditional methods and of Western and Eastern cultures. They emphasize moral virtue and spiritual development, and aim to guide students to become good and capable citizens who will benefit humankind. The schools offer a bilingual (Chinese/English) program where boys and girls study separately. In addition to standard academic courses, the curriculum includes ethics, meditation, Buddhist studies, and so on, giving students a foundation in virtue and guiding them to understand themselves and explore the truths of the universe. Branches of the schools (Sunday schools) have been established at branch monasteries with the aim of propagating filial piety and ethical education.

Dharma Realm Buddhist University, whose curriculum focuses on the Proper Dharma, does not merely transmit academic knowledge. It emphasizes a foundation in virtue, which expands into the study of how to help all living beings discover their inherent nature. Thus, Dharma Realm Buddhist University advocates a spirit of shared inquiry and free exchange of ideas, encouraging students to study various canonical texts and use different experiences and learning styles to tap their inherent wisdom and fathom the meanings of those texts. Students are encouraged to practice the principles they have understood and apply the Buddhadharma in their lives, thereby nurturing their wisdom and virtue. The University aims to produce outstanding individuals of high moral character who will be able to bring benefit to all sentient beings.

Sangha and Laity Training Programs

In the Dharma-ending Age, in both Eastern and Western societies there are very few monasteries that actually practice the Buddha's regulations and strictly uphold the precepts. Teachers with genuine wisdom and understanding, capable of guiding those who aspire to pursue careers in Buddhism, are very rare. The Venerable Master founded the Sangha and Laity Training Programs in 1982 with the goals of raising the caliber of the Sangha, perpetuating the Proper Dharma, providing professional training for Buddhists around the world on both practical and theoretical levels, and transmitting the wisdom of the Buddha.

The Sangha Training Program gives monastics a solid foundation in Buddhist studies and practice, training them in the practical affairs of Buddhism and Sangha management. After graduation, students will be able to assume various responsibilities related to Buddhism in monasteries, institutions, and other settings. The program emphasizes a thorough knowledge of Buddhism, under-standing of the scriptures, earnest cultivation, strict observance of precepts, and the development of a virtuous character, so that students will be able to propagate the Proper Dharma and perpetuate the Buddha's wisdom. The Laity Training Program offers courses to help laypeople develop correct views, study and practice the teachings, and understand monastic regulations and ceremonies, so that they will be able to contribute their abilities in Buddhist organizations.

Let Us Go Forward Together

In this Dharma-ending Age when the world is becoming increasingly dangerous and evil, the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, in consonance with its guiding principles, opens the doors of its monasteries and centers to those of all religions and nationalities. Anyone who is devoted to humaneness, righteousness, virtue, and the pursuit of truth, and who wishes to understand him or herself and help humankind, is welcome to come study and practice with us. May we together bring benefit and happiness to all living beings.

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Verse of Transference

May the merit and virtue accrued from this work,
Adorn the Buddha's Pure Lands,
Repaying four kinds of kindness above,
And aiding those suffering in the paths below.

May those who see and hear of this,
All bring forth the resolve for Bodhi,
And when this retribution body is over,
Be born together in ultimate bliss.

Dharma Protector Wei T’o Bodhisattva

The Shurangama Sutra

The Shurangama Sutra

Volume Three

a simple explanation by the

Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

English translation by the
Buddhist Text Translation Society

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Introduction

This is the third of eight volumes of the *Shurangama Sutra*, with commentaries from the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua.

In this volume, the Buddha continues his attempt to reveal to Ananda the true mind.

In “False Is Just True”, the Buddha clarifies that the ‘false’ mind is also the ‘true’ mind. The true is hidden within the false, and vice versa. Thus, the search for the truth starts with recognizing that which is false.

The Buddha then compassionately lists the ‘false’ realms (in which the ‘truth’ is to be found). They are: “The Five Skandhas”, which are form, feeling, thinking, activity and consciousness skandhas; “The Six Entrances”, which are the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind entrances; “The Twelve Places”, which are eye and form, ear and sound, nose and smells, tongue and tastes, body and touches, and mind and dharmas; and finally, with the addition of conciousness to the above organ-object pairs, this makes up the “The Eighteen Realms”. Though the Buddha earlier chose the seeing nature, one can actually enter the true by using any of the above.

Ananda, recollecting what the Buddha has said earlier, is puzzled about why the Buddha is now rejecting both causes & conditions and spontaneity. In “The Seven Elements Are All-

Pervasive", the Buddha explains how the elements of earth, fire, water, wind, emptiness, seeing and consciousness are beyond the confines of production and extinction, neither belonging to causes & conditions nor spontaneity. Their natures are originally the everlasting, true mind.

Gaining from this, Ananda finally understands that 'existence' and his mind is fundamentally one, and not two. Because of this unity, he realizes that his true mind is without boundaries, is all-pervasive, is everlasting and is originally pure. He then praises the Buddha and affirms his faith in "Ananda Gives Rise to Faith".

User's Guide

to the Shurangama Sutra series

Because of the length of the *Shurangama Sutra*, and the need to provide aid to various readers, the Sutra has been compiled into a series of 9 books: the "Sutra Text and Suppliments", and the remaining Volumes one to eight.

The "Sutra Text and Suppliments" contains:

1. the entire Sutra text, which is in excess of 2700 paragraphs;
2. the entire outline, which contains 1676 entries;
3. and a master index, which has index references for both the "Sutra Text and Suppliments" and the eight volumes.

Volumes one to eight contain:

1. the Sutra text, with commentaries;
2. the local outline entries;
3. and a local index.

Readers who wish to read or recite the Sutra in its entirety will find the "Sutra Text and Suppliments" very useful.

Those who wish to deeply study the Sutra with its commentaries will find volumes one to eight indispensable.

Exhortation to Protect and Propagate

by Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua

Within Buddhism, there are very many important sutras. However, the most important Sutra is the *Shurangama Sutra*. If there are places which have the *Shurangama Sutra*, then the Proper Dharma dwells in the world. If there is no *Shurangama Sutra*, then the Dharma Ending Age appears. Therefore, we Buddhist disciples, each and every one, must bring our strength, must bring our blood, and must bring our sweat to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*. In the *Sutra of the Ultimate Extinction of the Dharma*, it says very, very clearly that in the Dharma Ending Age, the *Shurangama Sutra* is the first to disappear, and the rest of the sutras disappear after it. If the *Shurangama Sutra* does not disappear, then the Proper Dharma Age is present. Because of that, we Buddhist disciples must use our lives to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*, must use vows and resolution to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*, and cause the *Shurangama Sutra* to be known far and wide, reaching every nook and cranny, reaching into each and every dust-mote, reaching out to the exhaustion of empty space and of the Dharma Realm. If we can do that, then there will be a time of Proper Dharma radiating great light.

Why would the *Shurangama Sutra* be destroyed? It is because it is too true. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's true body. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's sharira. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's true and actual stupa and shrine. Therefore, because

the *Shurangama Sutra* is so true, all the demon kings use all kinds of methods to destroy the *Shurangama Sutra*. They begin by starting rumors, saying that the *Shurangama Sutra* is phony. Why do they say the *Shurangama Sutra* is phony? It is because the *Shurangama Sutra* speaks too truly, especially in the sections on The Four Decisive Deeds, the Twenty-five Sages Describing Perfect Penetration, and the States of the Fifty Skandha Demons. Those of off-center persuasions and externally-oriented ways, weird demons and strange freaks, are unable to stand it. Consequently there are a good many senseless people who claim that the *Shurangama Sutra* is a forgery.

Now, the principles set forth in the *Shurangama Sutra* are on the one hand proper, and on the other in accord with principle, and the weird demons and strange freaks, those in various cults and sects, all cannot hide away their forms. Most senseless people, in particular unwise scholars and garbage-collecting professors "Tread upon the holy writ." With their extremely scant and partial understanding, they are confused and unclear, lacking real erudition and true and actual wisdom. That is why they falsely criticize. We who study the Buddhadharma should very deeply be aware of these circumstances. Therefore, wherever we go, we should bring up the *Shurangama Sutra*. Wherever we go, we should propagate the *Shurangama Sutra*. Wherever we go, we should introduce the *Shurangama Sutra* to people. Why is that? It is because we wish to cause the Proper Dharma long to dwell in the world.

If the *Shurangama Sutra* is regarded as true, then there is no problem. To verify its truth, let me say that if the *Shurangama Sutra* were phony, then I would willingly fall into the hells forever through all eternity—for being unable to recognize the Buddhadharma—for mistaking the false for true. If the *Shurangama Sutra* is true, then life after life in every time I make the vow to propagate the Great Dharma of the Shurangama, that I shall in every time and every place propagate the true principles of the Shurangama.

Everyone should pay attention to the following point. How could the *Shurangama Sutra* not have been spoken by the Buddha? No one else could have spoken the *Shurangama Sutra*. And so I hope that all those people who make senseless accusations will wake up fast and stop creating the causes for suffering in the Hell of Pulling Out Tongues. No matter who the scholar is, no matter what country students of the Buddhadharma are from, all should quickly mend their ways, admit their mistakes, and manage to change. There is no greater good than that. I can then say that all who look at the *Shurangama Sutra*, all who listen to the *Shurangama Sutra*, and all who investigate the *Shurangama Sutra*, will very quickly accomplish Buddhahood.

Composed by Gold Mountain Shramana Tripitaka Master Hua
Translated by Bhikshuni Heng Hsien
Reviewed by Shramanerika Heng Wen

The Eight Guidelines

of the Buddhist Text Translation Society

1. A volunteer must free him/herself from the motives of personal fame and profit.
2. A volunteer must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.
3. A volunteer must refrain from aggrandizing his/her work and denigrating that of others.
4. A volunteer must not establish him/herself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with his or her fault-finding.
5. A volunteer must take the Buddha-mind as his/her own mind.
6. A volunteer must use the wisdom of Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles.
7. A volunteer must request Virtuous Elders in the ten directions to certify his/her translations.
8. A volunteer must endeavour to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

Outline

of the Shurangama Sutra

The outline for the Shurangama Sutra was compiled by Dharma Master Yuan Ying, which categorizes the various parts of the Sutra text consisting of over 2,700 paragraphs to 1,676 entries.

These entries are presented in the form of a tree-like structure, dividing the various parts of the Sutra text into groups, those groupings being sub-divided further and further, thus providing a detailed break-down of the entire text.

Though the outline is not a prerequisite to reading the Sutra text and the accompanying commentaries, it serves as a useful tool for students of the Way who wish to deeply study the Sutra. Without this outline, students may find it difficult to refer to specific parts of the text.

Because of the size of the outline (and the Sutra), only outline entries which pertain to the Sutra text contained within this book is included.

For the outline of the entire Sutra, please refer to the "Sutra Text and Suppliments", where the entire sutra text, outline, and index entries are all combined into one single volume.

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釋迦牟尼文佛

Namo Original Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha

Verse for Opening a Sutra

The unsurpassed, profound, and wonderful Dharma,

Is difficult to encounter in hundreds of millions of eons,

I now see and hear it, receive and uphold it,

And I vow to fathom the Tathagata's true meaning.

CHAPTER 1

False Is Just True

L2 The Tathagata divides the explanation into four parts and thereby shows that the nature is permanently dwelling.
M1 He shows that what is false is just true.
N1 He explains that illusory, ephemeral characteristics are true.

Sutra:

"Ananda, you have not yet understood that all the defiling objects that appear, all the illusory, ephemeral characteristics, spring up in the very spot where they also come to an end. They are what is called 'illusory falseness.' But their nature is in truth the bright substance of wonderful enlightenment.

Commentary:

"Ananda, you have not yet understood." Are you still not clear about it**? "All the defiling objects that appear" –** the experiencing of each and every external defiling object **– "all the illusory, ephemeral characteristics…"** "Illusory" means unreal, not actual. "Ephemeral" means it seems to exist and yet doesn't; it doesn't seem to exist and yet does. Suddenly it exists, suddenly it does not. Illusory, ephemeral characteristics are things which are unreal. It looks to you like they actually exist, but in reality they are entirely illusory and transitory.

"These illusory, ephemeral characteristics **spring up in the very spot where they also come to an end**." They come forth anywhere at all, and wherever they happen to come up, that is where they come to an end. Their arising is an empty illusion, and their extinction is an empty illusion. They arise in an empty illusion and vanish in an empty illusion.

"They are what is called 'illusory falseness.' They go by the name of 'empty falseness.' **"But their nature is in truth the bright substance of wonderful enlightenment."** It is called falseness, but where do the roots of this falseness arise? They, too, come from the bright substance of wonderful enlightenment. They come forth from our true mind. The existence of the true gives rise to the false.

When the false arises, there is seeing and characteristics. There is the division of seeing (見分) and the division of characteristics (相分). The existence of the seeing division confers the ability to see things. The characteristics division consists of all the external forms and appearances. The division of seeing and the division of characteristics arise from the bright substance of wonderful enlightenment, from the pure nature and bright substance of the everlasting true mind. They do not come from elsewhere.

N2 Shows that the four parts are true.

Sutra:

"Thus it is throughout, up to the five skandhas and the six entrances, to the twelve places and the eighteen realms; the union and mixture of various causes and conditions account for their illusory and false existence, and the separation and dispersion of the causes and conditions result in their illusory and false extinction.

Commentary:

"Thus it is". Why did I say that the illusory, ephemeral characteristics arise in an empty falseness? The doctrine I explained applies **"throughout"**, that is, to various divisions **"up to the five**

skandhas" – form, feeling, thought, activity, and consciousness – "**and the six entrances**" – that is, the six sense organs, the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind **–** "**to the twelve places**" **–** the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, together with the six defiling objects, which are forms , sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas **–** "**and the eighteen realms**" **–** the six organs, the six defiling objects, and the six consciousnesses that are produced between the organs and the defiling objects opposite to them – the eye consciousness, the ear consciousness, the nose consciousness, the tongue-consciousness, the body consciousness, and the mind consciousness. The six organs and the six defiling objects make up the twelve places. With the six consciousnesses added, they are the eighteen realms. When the various form and mind dharmas mix and unite, empty falseness arises. **"The union and mixture of various causes and conditions account for their illusory and false existence, and the separation and dispersion of the causes and conditions result in their illusory and false extinction."** When causes and conditions do not mix and unite, there is an empty falseness which is called extinction. This is the nature of production and extinction.

Sutra:

"Who would have thought that production, extinction, coming, and going are fundamentally the everlasting, wonderful light of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, the unmoving, all pervading perfection, the wonderful nature of true suchness! If within the true and eternal nature one seeks coming and going, confusion and enlightenment, or birth and death, there is nothing that can be obtained.

Commentary:

They are all non existent. There isn't anything at all. When you do not understand, there is coming and going, there is confusion and enlightenment, there is birth and death. But if you understand the everlasting true mind, if you recognize your own basic nature, the pure nature and bright substance of the everlasting true mind,

you put an end to all the false production and extinction. Then if you look for such characteristics as coming and going, confusion and enlightenment, and birth and death, you won’t find them. You won’t find anything at all.

CHAPTER 2

The Five Skandhas

M2 He specifically explains that what is false is true.
N1 The five skandhas are the Treasury of the Thus Come One.
O1 A general statement.

Sutra:

"Ananda, why do I say that the five skandhas are basically the wonderful nature of true suchness, the Treasury of the Thus Come One?

Commentary:

"**Ananda, why do I say that the five skandhas are basically the wonderful nature of true suchness, the Treasury of the Thus Come One?** I will tell you, Ananda."

O2 A specific explanation.
P1 The form skandha.
Q1 Explains the dharma with an analogy.

Sutra:

"Ananda, consider this example: when a person who has pure clear eyes looks at clear, bright emptiness, he sees nothing but clear emptiness, and he is quite certain that nothing exists within it.

Commentary:

“Ananda, consider this example: when a person who has pure clear eyes looks at clear, bright emptiness, he sees nothing but clear emptiness.” His eyes are not diseased, unlike the person who had a film over his eyes. He looks at space clear for thousands of miles. “He sees nothing but clear emptiness.” It is just empty space, nothing else. There aren’t any clouds in it. **“And he is quite certain that nothing exists within it.”** In that emptiness there isn’t anything at all. The Treasury of the Thus Come One is the same way. In the Treasury of the Thus Come One, if you truly understand, there isn’t anything at all. That’s what the Sixth Patriarch was talking about when he said, “Basically, there is not one thing; where can the dust alight?” That experience, too, is the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

Sutra:

“If, for no apparent reason, the person does not move his eyes, the staring will cause fatigue, and then of his own accord, he will see strange flowers in space and other unreal appearances that are wild and disordered.

Commentary:

The person is the one mentioned above who with clear eyes looks at empty space and finds that there is nothing at all there. Empty space is all there is. **“If, for no apparent reason, the person does not move his eyes” –** if he fixes his gaze on emptiness and does not move **– “the staring will cause fatigue”**. He stares with unmoving eyes, looking straight into empty space and after a long time he gets tired. **“Then of his own accord, he will see strange flowers in space.”** After looking at emptiness for a long time, he sees things in it – for example, strange flowers, that is to say, unreal ones. Why are there strange flowers? Because he has looked for so long that his eyes have become fatigued, and so all kinds of strange flowers appeared, as well **as “other unreal appearances that are wild and disordered.”** There are not only strange flowers, but other things he has never seen before, in the

five colors and six hues, things which all seem to be real but are not. Perhaps the head of an animal is seen on a human body, or perhaps a person's head is seen with an animal's body. Many irrational things are seen in emptiness – things never seen before – because the eyes become blurry from too much staring. This kind of circumstance is concerned with the skandha of form.

Sutra:

"You should know that it is the same with the skandha of form.

Commentary:

Now we look at all the things in the world that have form and appearance and we think every one of them is real. In actuality, they follow the same principle as the example of the person who stares into space so that the "staring causes fatigue" and who "of his own accord" sees strange flowers in space. **"You should know that it is the same with the skandha of form."** It is like that, too.

Q2 Explains the analogy in detail.

Sutra:

"Ananda, the strange flowers come neither from emptiness nor from the eyes.

Commentary:

"**Ananda**, do you know that the skandha of form is the wonderful true suchness nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One? You should know, Ananda, that not any of **the strange flowers** – those strange flowers and all the other wild and disordered unreal appearances – **come neither from emptiness nor from the eyes**."

Sutra:

"The reason for this, Ananda, is that if the flowers were to come from emptiness, they would return to emptiness. If there is a coming out and a going in, the space would not be empty. If emptiness were not empty, then it could not contain the

appearance of the arisal and extinction of the flowers, just as Ananda's body cannot contain another Ananda.

Commentary:

"You should know **the reason for this, Ananda**, is just as with the doctrine I have explained above, **that if the flowers were to come from emptiness**, if you say the flowers and the wild and disordered unreal appearances emerge from the emptiness, **they would return to emptiness**. Since they are produced from emptiness, they should return to emptiness also. **If there is a coming out and a going in, the space would not be empty.** If the strange flowers can come forth from emptiness and can return to and enter emptiness, it wouldn't be emptiness. Emptiness is called emptiness because there is not a single thing in it. If something comes out of it and goes back into it, it can't be counted as emptiness, because there would be something in it. **If emptiness were not empty, then it could not contain the appearance of the arisal and extinction of the flowers.** If emptiness is not emptiness, the appearance of flowers would have nowhere to come forth and nowhere to be extinguished. **Just as Ananda's body cannot contain another Ananda.**" Emptiness doesn't have anything in it, so the flowers do not come from emptiness. Otherwise, emptiness would not be empty and it would be like your body, Ananda, which cannot contain another Ananda. No other Ananda can come into your body, and in the same way, if space is to be empty, it cannot contain external things.

Sutra:

"If the flowers were to come from the eyes, they would return to the eyes.

Commentary:

Perhaps you say that because the eye's staring causes fatigue, the eyes themselves give rise to the strange flowers and the wild and disorderly, unreal appearances.

Sutra:

"If the nature of the flowers were to come from the eyes, it would be endowed with the faculty of seeing. If it could see, then when it left the eyes it would become flowers in space, and when it returned it should see the eyes. If it did not see, then when it left the eyes it would obscure emptiness, and when it returned, it would obscure the eyes.

Commentary:

"If the nature of the flowers were to come from the eyes, it would be endowed with the faculty of seeing." Given that it comes from the eyes, it should therefore have a seeing nature. **"If it could see" –** if the flowers in space had a seeing nature – "**then when it left the eyes it would become flowers in space, and when it returned it should see the eyes.**" When it went out, there would be no flowers in the eyes, and when it returned the flowers would see the eyes. **"If it did not see" –** if when it came back it did not see the eyes, **"then when it left the eyes it would obscure emptiness, and when it returned, it would obscure the eyes."** It would be as if there were a film on the eyes and as if the film would disappear when the flowers went out. But when it returned, it would obstruct the eyes. Your eyes won't hold anything, and so if the flowers in space returned to your eyes, where could your eyes put them?

Sutra:

"Moreover, when you see the flowers, your eyes should not be obscured. So why is it that the eyes are said to be 'pure and bright' when they see clear emptiness?

Commentary:

"Moreover, when you see the flowers, your eyes should not be obscured." Still, if you assume that the flowers come from your eyes, when you see the flowers out in space, your eyes should not have a film on them; there should be nothing obstructing them. **"Why is it that the eyes are said to be 'pure and bright' when they see clear emptiness?"** Why is it that the eyes are said to be

pure and bright when they see clear emptiness, devoid of the flowers? Your eyes are said to be "pure and bright" because there is no film on them.

Q3 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that the skandha of form is empty and false, because it neither depends on causes and conditions for existence nor is spontaneous in nature.

Commentary:

"Therefore, you should know" – because of what has just been said, you should know that **"the skandha of form** basically **is empty and false, because it neither depends on causes and conditions for existence" –** it does not exist because of causes and conditions, **"nor is spontaneous in nature."**

P2 The feeling skandha.
Q1 Teaches with an analogy.

Sutra:

"Ananda, consider the example of a person whose hands and feet are relaxed and at ease and whose entire body is in balance and harmony. He is unaware of his life processes, because there is nothing agreeable or disagreeable in his nature. However, for some unknown reason, the person rubs his two hands together in emptiness, and sensations of roughness, smoothness, cold, and warmth seem to arise from nowhere between his palms.

Commentary:

"Ananda, consider the example of a person whose hands and feet are relaxed and at ease." He is at leisure with nothing in particular to do. **"And whose entire body" –** the Chinese here is literally "the hundred bones" – "**is in balance and harmony.**" The meaning is that he is very natural. **"He is unaware of his life processes."** All of a sudden it is as if he himself forgets his own

body and life, **"because there is nothing agreeable or disagreeable."** "Disagreeable" refers to a state of suffering. "Agreeable" refers to a state of bliss. He does not experience either suffering or bliss. **"However, for some unknown reason, the person rubs his two hands together in emptiness."** That person has no reason to put his two hands together and rub them in emptiness, but when he does, **"sensations of roughness, smoothness, cold, and warmth seem to arise from nowhere between his palms."** Some people's hands are very rough, some people's hands are supple and soft, as if there were a little oil on them. That softness is what is meant here by "smoothness." Or he may feel that his hands are cold; when he wrings them for a long time they become warm. These are all parts of the function of feeling. The function of feeling comes about when you have a kind of awareness which arises in your mind. The text says that they arise "for some unknown reason": that the appearances of roughness, smoothness, cold, and warmth are empty and false.

Sutra:

"You should know that it is the same with the skandha of feeling.

Commentary:

Of the five skandhas, **"You should know that it is the same with the skandha of feeling."**

Q2 Explains the analogy in detail.

Sutra:

"Ananda, all this illusory contact does not come from emptiness, nor does it come from the hands.

Commentary:

The form skandha was discussed before; now the feeling skandha is being discussed. **"Ananda, all this illusory contact" –** this empty, false, unreal, contact – **"does not come from emptiness, nor does it come from the hands."**

Sutra:

"The reason for this, Ananda, is that if it came from emptiness, then since it could make contact with the palms, why wouldn't it make contact with the body? It should not be that emptiness chooses what it comes in contact with.

Commentary:

"The reason for this, Ananda, is that if it came from emptiness" – if the awareness of contact, his feeling, came from emptiness, **"then since it could make contact with the palms, why wouldn't it make contact with the body?"** Why wouldn't it come into contact with the entire body? **"It should not be that emptiness chooses what it comes in contact with."** Basically, emptiness has no knowing awareness. It would not have a sense of awareness which would make it choose the hand and not choose the body. It would not have that kind of thought. So the feeling does not come from emptiness. It does not come from the hand, either.

Sutra:

"If it came from the palms, it could be readily felt without waiting for the two palms to be joined.

Commentary:

"If it came from the palms" – if the feelings of smoothness, roughness, cold, and warmth came from the palms, **"it could be readily felt without waiting for the two palms to be joined."** If the feelings came from the palm, there would be no need to wait until the palms come together before the feelings could exist.

Sutra:

"What is more, if it were to come from the palms, then the palms would know when they were joined. When they separated, the contact would return into the arms, the wrists, the bones, and the marrow, and you also should be aware of the course of its entry.

Commentary:

"What is more, if it were to come from the palms" – here is another doctrine. If the feeling came out of the palm, **"then the palms would know when they were joined."** When you placed your palms together, the palms would know it. **"When they separated, the contact would return into the arms, the wrists, the bones, and the marrow."** When you separated your palms, the awareness of contact should return through the hands to the arms by way of the wrists, and perhaps into the bones and marrow. **"And you also should be aware of the course of its entry."** How could it get inside without your knowing if it's smooth or rough or cold or warm? Why wouldn't you know what its course was, what path it took, when it went into the arm?

Sutra:

"It should also be perceived by the mind because it would behave like something coming in and going out of the body. In that case, what need would there be to put the two palms together to experience what is called 'contact?'

Commentary:

"It should also be perceived by the mind because it would behave like something coming in and going out of the body." It is certain that one would know in one's mind when the awareness of contact went out and when it returned, because naturally, there would be something which would perhaps go out of or perhaps come into the body. **"In that case, what need would there be to put the two palms together" –** why would you have to wait for the palms to be together before you know there is contact – **"to experience what is called 'contact?'"**

Q3 Concludes by returning false to true.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that the skandha of feeling is empty and false, because it neither depends on causes and conditions for existence nor is spontaneous in nature.

Commentary:

"Therefore, you should know that the skandha of feeling is empty and false." The feeling skandha is an empty falseness. **"Because it neither depends on causes and conditions for existence nor is spontaneous in nature."**

P3 The thinking skandha.
Q1 Teaches with an analogy.

Sutra:

"Ananda, consider the example of a person whose mouth waters at the mention of sour plums, or the soles of whose feet tingle when he thinks about walking along a precipice.

Commentary:

"**Ananda**, now I will go on to explain the skandha of thinking for you. The skandha of thinking also is the nature of the Thus Come One's Treasury; it also is the nature of wonderful true suchness. Consider, for example, **a person whose mouth waters at the mention of sour plums**. Ananda, the skandha of thinking is like a person whose mouth begins to pucker as soon as sour plums are as much as mentioned, **or the soles of whose feet tingle when he thinks about walking along a precipice.**" Say that on a very high mountain a very, very deep ten thousand foot gorge yawns below the rocks; if you stand at the edge of that precipice, the soles of your feet will ache. In fact, one need not even speak of actually going to the edge of the precipice; just thinking about it – once the thought enters your mind – you will be aware of an aching in your soles. How does it arise? It arises from the skandha of thinking. Without having eaten any sour plums, but simply from the mere mention of them – "Ah, sour plums are really sour!" – your mouth puckers, and the saliva begins to flow. So there's a Chinese proverb:

Sour plums can cure thirst,
But painted cakes cannot satisfy hunger.

Why is it that sour plums can cure thirst? It is because the skandha of thinking produces this kind of awareness. During the Three Kingdoms period in China, Ts'ao Ts'ao, a contemporary of Kuan Kung, went to Ch'u Cheng, accompanied by his massive army of more than a million. Ten miles from Ch'u Cheng they lost the way. They didn't know where they were and the troops didn't have any water to drink or any food to eat. They became obsessed by thirst, felt sick, and were unable to walk. They were all about to die of thirst. Ts'ao Ts'ao, who was clever as a fox, issued an order. "Don't stop to rest. Ahead is a grove of plum trees. When we get there, everyone can eat some plums." As soon as he mentioned the plums the soldiers' mouths began to water and their thirst was abated. They marched on in search of the plum grove. As it turned out, there wasn't any plum grove, but his mention of plums had satisfied their thirst.

Sutra:

"You should know that it is the same with the skandha of thinking.

Commentary:

"You should know that it is the same with the skandha of thinking," the skandha of thought.

Speaking of painted cakes reminds me of a story. Once there was a stingy man who decided to make a gift. "When is your birthday?" he asked his friend. "On your birthday I will give you a present. I'll give you a present worth a dollar." The other fellow, who was also stingy, said, "Thanks a lot. On your birthday I'll give you a present, too." "What are you going to give me?" the first one asked. "I'll give you a cake." And the second one took a piece of paper and drew a picture of a cake on it. "There," he said, "I'll give you that."

At that point, a third stingy fellow who was standing by taking all this in said, "That's still a lot of trouble. When your birthday comes, I'll give you a birthday cake this big. In fact, now I've

shown you how big it will be, and that counts as having given it to you. No need for me to draw a picture of it."

The third one not only couldn't give up a dollar to buy a present, when the second one drew a picture, he still felt that was too extravagant, so he just made a gesture and counted it as having given a birthday cake.

Q2 Explains the analogy in detail.

Sutra:

"Ananda, you should know that the watering of the mouth caused by the mention of the plums does not come from the plums, nor does it come from the mouth.

Commentary:

This situation of the mouth puckering at the mention of sour plums does not arise from the plums. It is because of the functioning of the skandha of thinking.

Sutra:

"The reason for this, Ananda, is that if it were produced from the plums, the plums should speak for themselves, why wait for someone to mention them? If it came from the mouth, the mouth itself should hear, and what need would there be to wait for the ear? If the ear alone heard, then why doesn't the water come out of the ear?

Commentary:

"The reason for this, Ananda – as to the circumstance I have described above, **is that if it were produced from the plums" –** if the watering of the mouth was produced from the plums – **"the plums should speak for themselves."** The plums themselves should speak, it should not be necessary for a person to speak of them. But the plums do not speak for themselves, and one must still wait for a person to speak of the plums for someone's mouth to water. **"If it came from the mouth" –** if it were because of the mouth that saliva flows – **"the mouth itself should hear."** The

mouth should be what hears someone speak of plums. It should not be the ear that hears**. "And what need would there be to wait for the ear?"** Why wait for the ear to hear it? It should be sufficient for the mouth to hear it. **"If the ear alone heard" –** if the hearing nature functioned only when something enters the ear, **"then why doesn't the water come out of the ear?"** If the ear and the mouth haven't any connection with each other, then when the ear hears someone speak of sour plums, the saliva should come out of the ear. After all, it was the ear that heard it. Is there any such principle as that?

Sutra:

"Thinking about walking along a precipice is explained in the same way.

Commentary:

"Thinking." You think about a precipice – there you are standing on the rim of ten thousand foot gorge: your legs get weak and the soles of your feet ache. There is a doctor here: doctor, would you agree that such a thing happens? You should know why it is that the soles of one's feet ache in such a situation. It is not even necessary to go and actually stand on the edge of the precipice; all you have to do is think about it. "Now I'm standing on the rim of a ten thousand foot precipice, and if I'm the least bit careless I will plummet over the side." Right then the soles of your feet begin to ache and your legs grow weak. People speak of the power of suggestion. Where does the power of suggestion come from? You should find its source. So, **"Thinking about walking along a precipice is explained in the same way."** It is the same principle of the mouth watering when one speaks of sour plums. They are both a result of the skandha of thinking.

Q3 Concludes by returning false to true.

Sutra:

“Therefore, you should know that the skandha of thinking is empty and false, since it neither depends upon causes and conditions for existence, nor is spontaneous in nature.

Commentary:

If it is not from causes and conditions and is not spontaneous in nature, then ultimately what is its nature?

It is the Nature of the Thus Come One’s Treasury, the wonderful nature of true suchness of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. **“Therefore, you should know –** you ought to know, Ananda **– that the skandha of thinking is empty and false.”** The skandha of thinking, one of the five skandhas, is empty and false. It is empty and false in its arising, and empty and false in its extinction.

What is the origin of this empty and false arising? It arises from within the wonderful nature of true suchness of the Thus Come One’s Treasury. From the truth, falseness arises, and so these empty and false things occur. Where do these doctrines of the mouth puckering and the feet aching come from? They come from empty falseness. And where does empty falseness come from? It comes from the wonderful nature of true suchness of the Thus Come One’s Treasury. **“Since it neither depends upon causes and conditions for existence, nor is spontaneous in nature.”**

P4 The skandha of activity.
Q1 Teaches with an analogy.

Sutra:

“Ananda, consider, for example, a swift rapids whose waves follow upon one another in orderly succession, the ones behind never overtaking the ones in front.

Commentary:

What was discussed above was the skandha of thinking. This section of text discusses the skandha of activity. The character

hsing (行), "activity," is also read *heng*. The skandha of activity is like a rapids, a place where the water current flows fastest. **"Ananda, consider, for example, a swift rapids whose waves follow upon one another in orderly succession, the ones behind never overtaking the ones in front."** The waves in front race on ahead, and more waves follow behind them. As you look at it there are waves to the left, and waves to the right, and yet though no one is watching over it, it is very orderly. For the most part, the waves are of one size, and the big ones are conspicuous for being too much wave all at once. Those waves are like the activity in people's minds. In the mind, in the eighth consciousness, one thought arises and disappears and is followed by the next thought. The arisal and disappearance of thoughts is like the waves on water. They move **"in orderly succession,"** each connected to the next, and that next connected to the one that follows, like the thoughts in people's minds: one thought ceases and the next arises. One thought is extinguished, and the next thought arises; that thought ceases, and still another thought arises, thought after thought without cease. They continue in orderly succession like the waves, never overtaking one another. The waves that come behind can't run ahead and overtake the ones in front. In the same way, your later thought cannot race ahead of your earlier thought. So between them there is very orderly activity, without the least bit of mistake or confusion. At first glance waves don't seem to have distinct boundaries, but actually waves move along one by one in very orderly succession without cease.

Sutra:

"You should know that it is the same with the skandha of activity.

Commentary:

"You should know that it is the same with the skandha of activity." The skandha of activity, the fourth of the five skandhas, is just like that swift rapids. The waves of thought in people's minds continue ceaselessly in orderly succession and that causes people to

move from youth to middle age, and from middle age to old age. Once old, they die. And this is the same principle as the waves following on one another.

Q2 Explains the analogy in detail.

Sutra:

"Ananda, thus the nature of the flow does not arise because of emptiness, nor does it come into existence because of the water. It is not the nature of water, and yet it is not separate from either emptiness or water.

Commentary:

"**Ananda**, you should know this doctrine for what it is. **The nature of the flow**, that swift rapids which rushes along so quickly, **does not arise because of emptiness.**" It is not because of emptiness that there are swift rapids. **"Nor does it come into existence because of the water."** Although the waves are in the water, it is not because of the water that the waves exist. **"It is not the nature of water" –** the waves are not the water itself **– "and yet it is not separate from either emptiness or water."** Where, then, does it come from?

Sutra:

"The reason for this, Ananda, is that if it arose because of emptiness, then the inexhaustible emptiness throughout the ten directions would become an inexhaustible flow, and all the worlds would inevitably be drowned.

Commentary:

"Ananda, I will explain it for you further. Why do I say it is not from emptiness that the waves of the swift rapids arise? I will tell you. **The reason for this, Ananda, is that if it arose because of emptiness, then the inexhaustible emptiness throughout the ten directions would become an inexhaustible flow.**" There is emptiness not only in this world, but in all the worlds throughout the ten directions. If the swift rapids were produced from

emptiness, then the inexhaustible emptiness in the ten directions – emptiness which is completely without bounds or limit – would become an indescribably massive swift torrent. And, since the swift torrent would be so massive, **"all the worlds would inevitably be drowned."** All of them would certainly be overwhelmed by the deluge, and all the people living in them and all the things contained in them would drown.

Sutra:

"If the swift rapids existed because of water, then their nature would differ from that of water and the location and characteristics of its existence would be apparent.

"If their nature were simply that of water, then when they became still and clear they would no longer be made up of water.

Commentary:

"If the swift rapids existed because of water – if you were to say it is because of the water that there are swift rapids which rush along so quickly, **then their nature would differ from that of water."** The basic nature of its substance would not be water. It should have a location and characteristics which would be apparent. But the swift rapids have no actual form or appearance.

"If their nature were simply that of water – if you were to say that the swift rapids were just water, **then when they became still and clear –** when there were no waves – **they would no longer be made up of water."** Without any waves there wouldn't be any water. If you were to say that waves of the swift current are the water, then when the waves disappeared, the water would also disappear. A change in nature would inevitably result in a change in substance.

Sutra:

"Suppose it were to separate from emptiness and water: there isn't anything outside of emptiness, and outside of water there isn't any flow.

Commentary:

“Suppose it were to separate from emptiness and water – you want to say that the swift rapids are apart from emptiness and water. But, **there isn’t anything outside of emptiness, and outside of water there isn’t any flow.** Outside of water there are no rapids. To say it is separate from water is also incorrect. You say it is not separate; but that is also incorrect. In the last analysis, Ananda, what would you say this is all about?” It is not something that exists because of water or because of emptiness. Its source is the wonderful nature of true suchness of the Thus Come One’s Treasury.

Q3 Concludes by returning false to true.

Sutra:

“Therefore, you should know that the skandha of activity is empty and false, since it neither depends upon causes and conditions for existence nor is spontaneous in nature.

Commentary:

“**Therefore –** earlier you said that causes and conditions and spontaneity are concerned here. Now **you should know that the skandha of activity is empty and false” –** the skandha of activity, the swift rapids, is an empty falseness; it is not real – **“since it neither depends upon causes and conditions for existence nor is spontaneous in nature.”** This has been a discussion of the skandha of activity. Its source is also the Treasury of the Thus Come One. But with the arisal of one ignorant thought, one becomes confused about the true and goes toward the false. You forget about the truth and go running after false things, and in this way the various empty and false appearances in the world are created.

P5 The consciousness skandha.
Q1 Teaches with an analogy.

Sutra:

"Ananda, consider, for example, a man who picks up a kalavinka pitcher and stops up its two holes. He lifts up the pitcher filled with emptiness and, walking some thousand li away, presents it to another country. You should know that the skandha of consciousness is the same way.

Commentary:

Form, feeling, thinking, and activity have already been discussed, and now the skandha of consciousness will be explained. First I will give a general review of the first four.

The skandha of form refers to things which have shape and appearance, which have material substance. When the staring eye looks into emptiness, strange flowers come into being. Although the strange flowers are empty and false, nonetheless they have form and appearance.

Feeling means reception. When the hands are rubbed together, there arises an awareness of coarseness and smoothness and of cold and warmth.

The skandha of thinking simply depends on the characteristic of thought. For instance, your ears hear someone speak of plums, and you begin to think about them. As soon as you do so, your mouth waters. This is a result of the skandha of thinking. "Thinking" here refers to false thinking.

Activity means movement. It is ceaseless. People are first young, and they become middle aged, and then old, and then they die. Thought after thought arises and is extinguished, thought after thought without cease. This is the skandha of activity.

The skandha of consciousness involves the making of distinctions. It discriminates, considers, and seeks advantages from circumstances. Thus, Ananda had not developed his skill, had not cultivated samadhi power, but was greedy for erudition: that is to

seek advantage from circumstances. The functionings of the mind which seeks advantages from circumstances are not actual.

Now the skandha of consciousness will be explained. **"Ananda, consider, for example, a man who picks up a kalavinka pitcher."** Kalavinka is a Sanskrit word which means "wonderfully sounding bird." The Kalavinka pitcher is made from the shape of that bird and has two holes. The call of the "wonderfully sounding bird" is extremely beautiful. It is able to cry out while still in the egg. Its sound transcends that of all other birds; and so everyone likes to hear it.

The man in the Buddha's example **"stops up its two holes."** He plugs up the two holes in the Kalavinka pitcher. **"He lifts up the pitcher filled with emptiness and, walking some thousand li away, presents it to another country."** What has he?

He has filled the pitcher up with emptiness. He takes the emptiness a thousand *li* away. A Chinese *li* is about a third of a mile. Maybe he walked, maybe he took a boat. At that time there weren't any airplanes or cars or trains. Now we can cover a thousand *li* in a day and think nothing of it. But at that time the way to cover a thousand *li* was to walk. What did he do with the emptiness? He made a gift of it to another country. Would you say this is possible?

You should know that the skandha of consciousness is the same way. The skandha of consciousness, the mind that makes distinctions, involves the same principle as capturing some emptiness and carrying it a thousand *li* to give to someone.

Sutra:

"Thus, Ananda, the space does not come from one place, nor does it go to another.

Commentary:

"Thus, Ananda, the space does not come from one place, nor does it go to another." The man made a gift of emptiness, but are the emptiness from one place and the emptiness of another place of

two kinds? Basically there is no distinction between them. Emptiness is all the same. If you capture a bottle of emptiness in one place and take it a thousand *li* away to another country and pour it out, it unites with the emptiness there. What distinction is there between them? Emptiness neither comes nor goes.

Q2 Explains the analogy in detail.

Sutra:

"The reason for this, Ananda, is that if it were to come from another place, then when the stored up emptiness in the pitcher went elsewhere there would be less emptiness in the place where the pitcher was originally.

Commentary:

"The reason for this, Ananda – why do I say that the emptiness does not come from one place nor go to another place? With emptiness there is no coming or going. **If it were to come from another place, then when the stored up emptiness in the pitcher went elsewhere" –** in the Kalavinka pitcher one stores a pitcherful of emptiness, and then one goes elsewhere – then **"there would be less emptiness in the place where the pitcher was originally.** You took a pitcherful of emptiness, so the emptiness in that place is less, right? Does it look to you like the emptiness is less? Does the place you took the pitcher to have more emptiness?" So this is a case of having nothing to do and going to look for something to do. Consciousness is also like that. Not having anything to do, it makes distinctions in the east, makes distinctions in the west, makes distinctions among various characteristics and among all kinds of situations. It is the same principle as putting some emptiness in a pitcher and carrying it off to another country to give as a gift.

Sutra:

"If it were to enter this region: when the holes were unplugged and the pitcher was turned over, one would see emptiness come out.

Commentary:

"If it were to enter this region: when the holes were unplugged and the pitcher was turned over, one would see emptiness come out." If there were a leaving and entering, if you say the emptiness is taken from one region to another region, then you would be able to see emptiness come out when the pitcher was unplugged and turned over. If you say you don't see it, then emptiness is non existent. If you could see it, it wouldn't be emptiness. So you cannot transport emptiness. You cannot move emptiness from one place to another.

Q3 Concludes by returning false to true.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that the skandha of consciousness is empty and false, since it neither depends upon causes and conditions for existence nor is spontaneous in nature.

Commentary:

"Therefore – because of this, Ananda **– you should know that the skandha of consciousness is empty and false" –** it, too, is empty and false **– "since it neither depends upon causes and conditions for existence" –** it is not because of causes and conditions that consciousness exists **– "nor is spontaneous in nature."** Nor is there consciousness because of spontaneity. Its origin, too, lies in the wonderful nature of true suchness of the Thus Come One's Treasury.

CHAPTER 3

The Six Entrances

N2 The six entrances are the Treasury of the Thus Come One.
O1 General statement.

Sutra:

“Moreover, Ananda, why do I say that the six entrances have their origin in the wonderful nature of true suchness, the Treasury of the Thus Come One?

Commentary:

The five skandhas of form, feeling, thinking, activity, and consciousness have now been explained. All five are a manifestation of the wonderful nature of true suchness of the Thus Come One’s Treasury. Now the Buddha again calls out, **“Moreover, Ananda, why do I say that the six entrances have their origin in the wonderful nature of true suchness, the Treasury of the Thus Come One?”** Why is it said that the six entrances – the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind -are all the nature of the Thus Come One’s Treasury? The six entrances will be distinguished below, and it will be explained.

O2 Specific explanation.
P1 The eye entrance.
Q1 Brings up example to reveal the false.

Sutra:

“Ananda, although the eye’s staring causes fatigue, the eye and the fatigue originate in Bodhi. Staring gives rise to the characteristic of fatigue.

Commentary:

The Buddha called out, **“Ananda, although the eye’s staring causes fatigue” –** this refers to the earlier discussion of the eye that looks into emptiness until its staring gives rise to the characteristic of fatigue. The eye stares and eventually becomes tired. **“The eye and the fatigue originate in Bodhi. Staring gives rise to the characteristic of fatigue.”** These two kinds of manifestations are not apart from Bodhi. In the true nature of Bodhi, the characteristic of fatigue is produced.

Q2 Explains that the false has no substance.

Sutra:

“Because a sense of seeing is stimulated in the midst of the two false, defiling objects of light and dark, defiling appearances are taken in; this is called the nature of seeing. Apart from the two defiling objects of light and dark, this seeing is ultimately without substance.

Commentary:

“Why do I say that within the true nature of Bodhi the staring gives rise to the characteristic of fatigue? Ananda, you should know that **because a sense of seeing is stimulated in the midst of the two false, defiling objects of light and dark**” – it becomes involved with the two characteristics of form, light and dark, two false, defiling objects. Light and dark are part of the empty and false environment which lies before you. With the existence of this empty, false environment, there arises the nature of seeing. **“Defiling aspects are taken in” –** the seeing takes in the forms and

appearances of the defiling environment which lies before it. **“This is called the nature of seeing.”** It is the nature of the substance of seeing. This “nature of seeing” does not refer to the “understanding the mind and seeing the nature” which is discussed in the Ch’an School. Here, the “nature of seeing” refers to the substance and nature of one’s ordinary seeing. “Understanding the mind and seeing the nature” means one understands one’s own mind and sees one’s own nature. “Seeing the nature” refers in that case to seeing one’s own inherent Buddha nature. But the “seeing nature” referred to here is just the nature of ordinary seeing. **“Apart from the two defiling objects of light and dark, this seeing” –** when this nature of seeing becomes separate from the two defiling objects of light and dark **– is ultimately without substance.”** It hasn’t any actual substance. There is nothing which actually exists.

Q3 It has no source.

Sutra:

“Thus, Ananda, you should know that seeing does not come from light or dark, nor does it come forth from the sense organ, nor is it produced from emptiness.

Commentary:

“Thus, Ananda, you should know that seeing does not come from light or dark.” The nature of seeing does not come from light, nor is it produced from within darkness. **“Nor does it come forth from the sense organ” –** nor is it produced from the eye, **“nor is it produced from emptiness.”** Nor is it produced from within emptiness.

Sutra:

“Why? If it came from light, then it would be extinguished when it is dark, and you would not see darkness. If it came from darkness, then it would be extinguished when it is light, and you would not see light.

Commentary:

“Why? If it came from light” – if the nature of seeing came from the defiling object of light **– “then it would be extinguished when it is dark.”** The two defiling objects of light and dark cannot exist simultaneously. When one comes, the other goes. They cannot stand together. If you want to say that the seeing comes from light, then there could not be any darkness. **“And you would not see darkness.”** And so the nature of seeing would not see dark things. But when the light goes, the seeing can see the darkness. So the seeing does not come from light, nor does it come from darkness. **“If it came from darkness, then it would be extinguished when it is light.”** If the nature of seeing arose from the defiling object of darkness, there would not be any light. We would not be able to see the characteristic of light.

Sutra:

“Suppose it came from the sense organ, which is obviously devoid of light and dark: a nature of seeing such as this would have no self-nature.

Commentary:

If you say the seeing is produced from the eye, **“Suppose it came from the sense organ, which is obviously devoid of light and dark.”** If it came from the eye, it would not be composed of the two kinds of defiling appearances of light and dark. According to that explanation**, “a nature of seeing such as this” –** the seeing essence **– “would have no self-nature.”** If it came from the eye, it would not have its own substantial nature. So it is not brought about from the sense organ.

Sutra:

“Suppose it came forth from emptiness. When it looks in front of you, it sees the shapes of the defiling dust; turning around, it would see your sense organ. Moreover, if it were emptiness itself which sees, what connection would that have with your entrance?

Commentary:

"Suppose it came forth from emptiness. Suppose you say the essence of seeing is produced from within emptiness. **When it looks in front of you, it sees the shapes of the defiling dust."** Looking in front, it can see the defiling dust. **"Turning around, it would see your sense organ.** When the seeing turned back, it would see your eye. It sees in front; why can't it see when it turns around? Nothing is obstructing it. Why can't you see your own eyes? **Moreover, if it were emptiness itself which sees –** moreover, if you say it is produced from emptiness, if emptiness itself sees emptiness, **what connection would that have with your entrance?** Would it have any connection with your own basic nature? Do you have anything to do with what goes on with emptiness?" So it is not produced from emptiness.

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that the eye entrance is empty and false, since it neither depends upon causes and conditions for existence nor is spontaneous in nature.

Commentary:

"Therefore, because of this, Ananda, **you should know that the eye entrance,** the eye organ, **is empty and false.** Its arisal is empty and false, and its extinction is empty and false, **since it neither depends upon causes and conditions for existence –** it is not produced from causes and conditions, and its extinction is not based on causes and conditions **– nor is spontaneous in nature."** Nor does it come about spontaneously. Its place of origin is within the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

P2 The ear entrance.
Q1 Brings up an example to reveal the false.

Sutra:

“Ananda, consider, for example, a person who suddenly stops up his ears with two fingers. Because the sense organ of hearing has become fatigued, a sound is heard in his head. However, both the ears and the fatigue originate in Bodhi. Monotony will produce the characteristic of fatigue.

Commentary:

Now the ear entrance will be discussed. **“Ananda, consider, for example, a person” –** basically there is no such person who plays around like this. The Buddha just supposes there might be such a person **– “who suddenly stops up his ears with two fingers.** He plugs up his ears. **Because the sense organ of hearing has become fatigued, a sound is heard in his head.”** After you have plugged up your ears for a long time, they don’t hear the sounds outside, but inside something goes haywire. A sound comes forth inside. The sounds we hear are sounds outside, but now he stops up his ears so he can’t hear outside, and he hears a sound inside.

To plug up your ears for that long would be like staying in your room for a long time and not going outside to look at things. After a long while you will feel very depressed, and you’ll want to go out for a walk and run around. In the same way the ear usually listens to things going on outside. If you do not permit it to listen, but instead stop it up so it cannot hear, it will listen inside. What kind of sound occurs inside the head? Try it out. Stop up your ears for a couple of days and see what sound you hear. Then you will know. So I won’t discuss now what kind of sound the person in the example heard. **“However, both the ears and the fatigue originate in Bodhi.”** The characteristic of fatigue and the ear are both the true nature of Bodhi within the Treasury of the Thus Come One. **“Monotony will produce the characteristic of fatigue.”**

One ignorant thought produces falseness, and then it turns into the functioning of the ear organ.

Q2 Explains that the false has no substance.

Sutra:

"Because a sense of hearing is stimulated in the midst of the two false, defiling objects of movement and stillness, defiling appearances are taken in; this is called the nature of hearing. Apart from the two defiling objects of movement and stillness, this hearing is ultimately without substance.

Commentary:

"Because it relies on **the two false, defiling objects of movement and stillness" –** hearing dwells in the midst of them. In the midst of them arises a hearing nature – **"defiling appearances are taken in."** The two defiling objects of movement and stillness cause the nature of hearing to arise in the ear. The hearing nature is like a magnet which attracts pieces of metal. These defiling appearances are not pure and clean. They are called "dust" in Chinese. Why is there defilement in people's self natures? I'll tell you why. It is because the eyes look at things and attract defiling appearances, which makes them unclean. The ears hear sounds and attract the defiling appearances. They attract unclean things. Basically the self nature is clear and pure. It has no defilement. But because the eye and ear attract unclean external things, the self nature within becomes defiled also.

The word "attract" (*hsi* 吸) can also mean to "inhale," as in inhaling cigarette smoke. When one inhales cigarette smoke, it passes into the lungs, and although ordinary people cannot see into their own insides, the fact remains that one's throat, windpipe, and lungs become coated with tar. Haven't you seen the black tar collected in a chimney? People who smoke have the same kind of deposits of tar in their lungs. But since you haven't had an operation to disclose this, your intestines, throat, and internal organs can be coated with tar and you still are unaware of it.

"Defiling aspects are taken in" is the same kind of principle. Because you take in external defiling appearances, your self nature is coated with a kind of tar, although you cannot see it. It is defiled by these things, and because it is covered over, it lacks light. Shen Hsiu said,

The body is a Bodhi tree,
The mind a bright mirror stand.
Time and again brush it clean,
And let no dust alight.

Basically this verse is a fine expression of principle, but these are not the words of one who has seen his nature. It talks about cultivation, a level prior to seeing the nature. It likens cultivation of the Way to dusting a mirror, over and over again to keep it bright. One who cultivates the Way is like one who wipes the dust off the mirror. After Great Master Shen Hsiu spoke this verse, the Sixth Patriarch, the Great Master Hui Neng, replied with the following verse:

Originally Bodhi has no tree,
Nor any bright mirror stand.
Originally there is not one thing.
Where can the dust alight?

That is to say, everything is taken care of. In cultivating the Way he has already been certified as having obtained the fruition. After one has been certified as having attained the fruition, it is not necessary to do the kind of work the Great Master Shen Hsiu's verse speaks of. Most people say that Great Master Hui Neng's verse is well said, but that the Great Master Shen Hsiu's is poorly stated. Actually, both verses are good. For those who understand the Buddhadharma, every dharma is Buddhadharma. When you speak Buddhadharma to those who do not understand, they do not realize it is Buddhadharma. So you should conscientiously investigate this doctrine. If you understand it, you can understand all doctrines.

"This is called the nature of hearing" – when the organ of the ear takes in the defiling objective realm. **"Apart from the two defiling objects of movement and stillness"** – if the hearing nature is separated from the two defiling objects of movement and stillness – **"this hearing is ultimately without substance."** It hasn't any nature of its own.

Q3 It has no source.

Sutra:

"Thus, Ananda, you should know that hearing does not come from movement and stillness; nor does it come from the sense organ, nor is it produced from emptiness.

Commentary:

"Thus" refers to the circumstance spoken of above, in which "the ear and the fatigue are both Bodhi. Monotony gives rise to the characteristic of fatigue." **"Ananda, you should know that hearing does not come from movement and stillness."** It is not from movement and stillness that the hearing nature comes. **"Nor does it come from the sense organ."** Nor does the hearing nature come from the ear. **"Nor is it produced from emptiness."** Nor is the nature of hearing produced from within emptiness.

Sutra:

"Why? If it came from stillness, it would be extinguished when there is movement, and you would not hear movement. If it came from movement, then it would be extinguished when there is stillness, and you would not be aware of the stillness.

Commentary:

"Why? If it came from stillness" – this is more or less like the meaning presented above, but you should not be annoyed. The doctrine must be explained in minute detail. The Buddha explained the realm of the six organs in great detail. **"It would be extinguished when there is movement, and you would not hear movement."** If the nature of hearing came from stillness, then

when there is movement it would be destroyed. There would not be any hearing nature. But there is a hearing nature when there is stillness, and there is a hearing nature when there is movement. **"If it came from movement, then it would be extinguished when there is stillness, and you would not be aware of the stillness."** If the hearing nature came from within movement, there wouldn't be any stillness. You wouldn't know about the characteristic of stillness. If it came from within stillness, then you wouldn't know there is a characteristic of movement. Therefore, the hearing nature is not produced from the two defiling objective appearances of movement and stillness.

Sutra:

"Suppose it came from the sense organ, which is obviously devoid of movement and stillness: a nature of hearing such as this would have no self nature.

Commentary:

"Suppose it came from the sense organ, which is obviously devoid of movement and stillness." The two defiling objects of movement and stillness would be absent. **"A nature of hearing such as this"** spoken of above, **"would have no self nature."** Why? If it had a substance, it would have a substantial nature, but you cannot find the substantial nature of the hearing nature.

Sutra:

"Suppose it came from emptiness: emptiness would then become hearing and would no longer be emptiness. Moreover, if it were emptiness itself which hears, what connection would it have with your entrance?

Commentary:

"Suppose it came from emptiness – if it is produced from within emptiness **– emptiness would then become hearing and would no longer be emptiness."** Suppose the hearing nature arose from within emptiness. Emptiness is devoid of knowing and awareness; it is senseless, and so if emptiness were to have a nature

of hearing, it could no longer be called emptiness. Therefore, hearing does not come from emptiness. **"Moreover, if it were emptiness itself which hears –** suppose we say that the hearing nature is produced from emptiness, then **what connection would it have with your entrance?"** What would it have to do with you? It wouldn't have any connection with anyone.

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that the ear entrance is empty and false, since it neither depends upon causes and conditions for existence, nor is spontaneous in nature.

Commentary:

"Therefore, you should know that the ear entrance is empty and false. Because of this, you ought to know that the ear entrance – that kind of hearing nature – is an empty falseness, **since it neither depends upon causes and conditions for existence, nor is spontaneous in nature."** It does not originate by being produced either from causes and conditions or by spontaneity.

P3 The nose entrance.
Q1 Brings up an example to reveal the false.

Sutra:

"Ananda, consider, for example, a person who inhales deeply through his nose. After he has inhaled for a long time it becomes fatigued, and then there is a sensation of cold in the nose. Because of that sensation, there are the distinctions of penetration and obstruction, of emptiness and actuality, and so forth, including all fragrant and stinking vapors. However, both the nose and the fatigue originate in Bodhi. Overexertion will produce the characteristic of fatigue.

Commentary:

The eyes and ears have already been explained above. Now it is the nose entrance which will be discussed. **"Ananda,"** Shakyamuni

Buddha calls Ananda’s name in order to cause him to be particularly attentive. “You should listen well to the doctrines I explain for you. **Consider, for example, a person” –** suppose there were such a one. What does this person do? He hasn’t anything to do, so he plays a joke on him self. How? He **“inhales deeply through his nose.”** He keeps sniffing in. He inhales sharply. Now, usually we make use of our sense of smell when there is something to smell, but this person inhales deeply through his nose, and not only does he do it deeply, he does it for a long time. **“After he has inhaled for a long time it becomes fatigued.”** If you breathe in for a long time, you will feel tired. The nose will get tired. And when it gets tired false thinking arises. The nose gives rise to false thinking. What kind of false thinking? Probably it thinks, “Rest. Rest.” But the person does not let it rest. And so then it has a sensation. What sensation? **“Then there is a sensation of cold in the nose.”** The breath it takes in feels cold. Extremely icy. “**Because of that sensation, there are the distinctions** made.” In the midst of that icy breath, it gives rise to discriminations concerning the sensation of the breath entering the nostrils. What distinctions does it make? **“Penetration and obstruction.”** “Ah, my nostrils are stopped up.” Or, “I can breathe through my right nostril but not through my left one.” He starts making distinctions. Not having anything to do, he finds something to do, producing all those discriminations. **“Emptiness and actuality.”** “Emptiness” refers to penetration, and “actuality” refers to obstruction. He thinks, “Ah, do I have a cold now, since I can’t breathe through my nose?” He makes these kinds of distinctions. **“And so forth, including all fragrant and stinking vapors.”** What is meant by “stinking?” The Chinese character 臭 (*hsiu*, to stink) is a combination of the character 自 (*tzu*, self) and the character 大 (*ta*, great); so “stinking” is explained as “a great self.” To look upon oneself as very great is what is meant by “stinking.” So it is said, “a great self stinks.” Some people don’t know what “fragrant and stinking vapors” refers to. I’ll tell you. Take a fish, set it down somewhere, and pay no further attention to it. After a while it will stink. And when it begins

to stink, it will produce worms. Basically fish are edible, but once there are worms in them, you don't want to eat them. Not to speak of eating them, all you have to do is think about what they would smell like, and that is enough to make you want to vomit. Just as when someone speaks of sour plums your mouth waters, or when you think about standing on the rim of a ten thousand foot precipice, your legs grow weak, and the soles of your feet begin to ache: it's the same principle. If you think about stinking things, you want to vomit.

It's very strange: people from Shanghai only like to eat things that stink. They like to eat bean curd that smells like excrement from a toilet. Wouldn't you say that is strange? I'm not slandering people from Shanghai: that's really the way they are. Then again, when I went to P'u Tou Mountain, to Fa Yu Monastery and P'u T'i Monastery, the people native to these areas ate nothing but stinking sugar cane. Basically sugar cane is for making sugar, and I don't know what they did to it, but it stank to high heaven. Basically I am not choosy about what I eat. I eat the good and bad alike. When it comes to food, I don't make use of the consciousness of the mind which makes distinctions. But that sugar cane stank so badly it was not easy to eat. The people of that area could not get along without eating it, though. That's an example of "to each his own." They like to eat that stinking sugar cane, and if you didn't give it to them to eat, they thought you were mistreating them. And so it is in this world; there are many kinds of things to eat, and people like to eat things with different tastes. People's natures are different every single place you go.

You don't have to pay any attention to whether things stink as long as you don't have a "great self." Looking upon one's self as very great is stinking. It is more stinking than stinking fish and stinking excrement. No one dares get near you. Why? It is not because you are great; it is because you have turned into something stinking.

Q2 Explains the false has no substance.

Sutra:

“Because a sense of smelling is stimulated in the midst of the two false, defiling objects of penetration and obstruction, defiling appearances are taken in; this is called the nature of smelling. Apart from the two defiling objects of penetration and obstruction, this smelling is ultimately without substance.

Commentary:

“Because a sense of smelling is stimulated in the midst of the two false, defiling objects of penetration and obstruction” – the defiling objects of penetration and obstruction, those unclean things become manifest, and within them arises a smelling nature. The Chinese character 聞 (*wen*), can mean both to hear and to smell. Here it does not refer to hearing, but rather to the smelling nature. **“Defiling appearances are taken in.”** Because the smelling nature inhales the two defiling appearances of penetration and obstruction, **“this is called the nature of smelling.”** Once again, the smelling nature (*wen hsing*, 聞性) does not refer to the hearing nature *wen hsing* (聞性) which returns the hearing to hear the self nature. It is not what Gwan Yin Bodhisattva refers to when he says, “returning the hearing to hear the self nature, which I practiced to accomplishment of the unsurpassed Way.” He listened to his own self-nature, and practiced to accomplishment the unsurpassed Way. He obtained the perfect penetration of the ear organ. The text here, though, refers to the ability to smell. **“Apart from the two defiling objects of penetration and obstruction, this smelling is ultimately without substance.”** Apart from the two defiling states of penetration and obstruction, apart from these two defiling objects before one, smelling basically has no substantial nature.

Q3 It has no source.

Sutra:

"You should know that smelling does not come from penetration and obstruction, nor does it come forth from the sense organ, nor is it produced from emptiness.

Commentary:

This is the same as the doctrine explained above. **"You should know,** Ananda, **that smelling,** the smelling nature, **does not come from penetration and obstruction."** It is not from penetration and obstruction that the smelling nature comes into being. **"Nor does it come forth from the sense organ."** Nor is it that the nose produces the smelling nature. **"Nor is it produced from emptiness."** Where does it come from?

Sutra:

"Why? If it came from penetration, the smelling would be extinguished when there is obstruction, and then how could it experience obstruction? If it existed because of obstruction, then where there is penetration there would be no smelling; in that case, how would the awareness of fragrance, stench, and other such sensations come into being?

Commentary:

"Why? What doctrine leads me to say that it does not come from penetration and obstruction, nor from the sense organ, nor from emptiness? I will explain it to you. Listen. **If it came from penetration, the smelling would be extinguished when there is obstruction."** Penetration and obstruction are direct opposites, and so if the nature of smelling came from penetration, obstruction would not have a smelling nature. The nature that smells obstructions would be extinguished. **"And then how could it experience obstruction?** If the nature that smells obstructions were absent, how would you be able to know there are obstructions? **If it existed because of obstruction –** if the smelling nature existed because of obstructions, **then where there is penetration**

there would be no smelling. You would not be able to smell with the smelling nature. How is it that you could perceive penetration and could perceive obstruction? Therefore, it does not come from penetration, and it does not come from obstruction. You should understand the nature of smelling. **In that case, how would the awareness of fragrance, stench, and other such sensations come into being?”** Since it is neither penetrations nor obstructions, how do the sensations of fragrance and stench come into being?

Sutra:

“Suppose it came from the sense organ, which is obviously devoid of penetration and obstruction. A nature of smelling such as this would have no self nature.

Commentary:

“Suppose it came from the sense organ” – if it were produced from the nose **– “which is obviously devoid of penetration and obstruction.”** It hasn’t any connection with penetration and obstruction. **“A nature of smelling such as this would have no self nature.”** However you explain it, it hasn’t any self nature either.

Sutra:

“Suppose it came from emptiness: smelling itself would turn around and smell your own nose. Moreover, if it were emptiness itself which smelled, what connection would it have with your entrance?

Commentary:

“Suppose it came from emptiness” – if the smelling nature came forth from emptiness **– smelling itself would turn around and smell your own nose.”** It should first smell your nose. **“Moreover, if it were emptiness itself which smelled, what connection would it have with your entrance?** Moreover, there’s another way to explain it. Let’s just suppose that the smelling nature did come from emptiness. Then what connection would it

have with your nose entrance? Think it over. Is there any such principle?"

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that the nose entrance is empty and false, since it neither depends upon causes and conditions for existence nor is spontaneous in nature.

Commentary:

"Therefore, you should know – you ought to know the reason behind this doctrine is – **that the nose entrance is empty and false."** The nose organ, along with the smelling nature which is produced in it, is also empty, false, and unreal, **"since it neither depends upon causes and conditions for existence nor is spontaneous in nature."** As to its origin, it is not counted as a dharma produced from causes and conditions. Nor is its origin a spontaneous coming into being. Ultimately where does it come from? Have I not already explained it above? The five skandhas, the six entrances, the twelve places, and the eighteen realms – all these functions and awareness – do not go beyond the wonderful nature of true suchness of the Thus Come One's Treasury. They are all produced from the wonderful nature of true suchness of the Thus Come One's Treasury. Because of the first ignorant thought, all kinds of false views and false characteristics arise. The division into seeing and characteristics arises. "Seeing" is the ability to perceive; "characteristics" refers to things with form and appearance which are perceived. They are all created from the ignorant thought of the false thinking mind.

P4 The tongue entrance.
Q1 Brings up an example to reveal the false.

Sutra:

"Ananda, consider, for example, a person who licks his lips with his tongue. His excessive licking causes fatigue. If the person is sick, there will be a bitter flavor; a person who is not

sick will have a subtle sweet sensation. Sweetness and bitterness demonstrate the tongue's sense of taste. When the organ is inactive, a sense of tastelessness prevails. However, both the tongue and the fatigue originate in Bodhi. Stress produces the characteristic of fatigue.

Commentary:

Before you heard the Sutra, you were together with your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind every day, but in all that time you never knew where they came from. Who would have guessed that there were so many things in the Treasury of the Thus Come One?

How big is the Treasury of the Thus Come One, anyway, that it is able to contain so many things?

The Treasury of the Thus Come One is bigger than anything else, and so it can contain everything. If it were not bigger than anything else then it would never be able to contain so many things.

Where does it put so many things?

Divide it up into categories. You have your own eye-entrance, and other people have their own eye entrances; you have your ear entrance, and other people have their ear-entrances; you have your nose entrance, others have their nose entrances; you have your tongue entrance, and they have their tongue entrances. If they were all just jumbled up together, when it came time to use them how would you be able to? If they were not simply lumped together but were divided so that each person's entrances were in an individual place, there would have to be a lot of places. It would have to be a big space. That's why I say that the Treasury of the Thus Come One is bigger than anything else and can contain everything. There is nothing it does not contain. Where are we now? We are all in the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

"We haven't seen what the Treasury of the Thus Come One looks like," you say.

You see it every day, but you don't recognize it. In all your daily activities you are within the Treasury of the Thus Come One. What your eyes see, what your ears hear -absolutely everything is within the Treasury of the Thus Come One. Yet you don't know what the Treasury of the Thus Come One looks like. In China there is the saying,

I can't tell what Lu Mountain really looks like,
Because I myself am standing on Lu Mountain.

Why can't you tell what Lu Mountain looks like? Because you are on the mountain itself, and so you cannot see it in its entirety. Those of you who understand know that everything is a manifestation of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. Those who don't understand the Buddhadharma don't even know what is meant by the Treasury of the Thus Come One. Such people slander the Buddha. How? They say, "All Buddhism talks about is the Treasury of the Thus Come One, the Treasury of the Thus Come One, and how it contains everything. The Buddha's greed is greater than anyone else's. He stores away absolutely everything." But this is a mistake. The Treasury of the Thus Come One is not the Buddha's. Everyone has a share in it. So that kind of view is a mistake.

"Ananda, consider, for example, a person who licks his lips with his tongue." He uses his tongue to lick his own lips. I'll tell you something funny. More than likely that man didn't have a girlfriend, so he took to kissing himself. Do you believe that? It's true! **"His excessive licking causes fatigue."** He doesn't just lick them once and let it go at that. He continually licks his lips. He licks himself for a long time and then gets tired. **"If the person is sick"** – if the person who is licking his lips is sick, **"there will be a bitter flavor."** After licking for a long time he will be aware of a very bitter flavor. What kind of sickness does this sick person have? Perhaps he's love sick; that is, he's thinking about women. So he licks his own lips for a long time and is aware of bitterness. He feels, "Ah, this isn't flavorful – it's not very interesting." Do you notice how when I speak Buddhadharma nobody seems to

understand very well, but as soon as I begin to explain such matters as this, everyone understands?

“A person who is not sick will have a subtle sweet sensation.” Someone who is not sick will have ever so slight a sensation of sweetness. **“Sweetness and bitterness demonstrate the tongue’s sense of taste.”** Because of these two flavors, the organ of the tongue manifests. Then the function of the tongue can appear. **“When the organ is inactive, a sense of tastelessness prevails.”** When the tongue is not in motion, tastelessness constantly prevails in the tongue. “Tastelessness” means no flavor whatsoever. **“However, both the tongue and the fatigue** come together. They **originate in Bodhi.”** Why does the tongue get fatigued in that way? **“Stress produces the characteristic of fatigue.”** It occurs when, in the true nature of Bodhi, a falseness arises, and prolongation produces the characteristic of fatigue.

Q2 Explains that the false has no substance.

Sutra:

“Because the two defiling objects of sweetness and bitterness, as well as tastelessness, stimulate a recognition of taste which in turn draws in these defiling sensations, it becomes what is known as a sense of taste. Apart from the two defiling objects of sweetness and bitterness and apart from tastelessness, the sense of taste is originally without a substance.

Commentary:

“Because the two defiling objects of sweetness and bitterness, as well as tastelessness, stimulate a recognition of taste which in turn draws in these defiling sensations, it becomes what is known as a sense of taste.” The word “tastelessness” appears here, but you can say that it doesn’t count as a flavor, so the text merely says, “two false, defiling objects.” “Plain cabbage boiled in plain water is tasteless and hasn’t any flavor.” If one doesn’t add any salt or any oil but just cooks the cabbage in plain water, it will be tasteless. Within bitterness and sweetness a

kind of awareness arises and takes in the two appearances. **"Apart from the two defiling objects of sweetness and bitterness and apart from tastelessness, the sense of taste is originally without a substance."** Although tastelessness basically lacks flavor, it gives rise to sweetness and bitterness, and so you could say that tastelessness is the sweet and is the bitter, and that is why the text refers to "two kinds of defiling objects." Apart from them, taste has no substantial nature of its own.

Q3 It has no source.

Sutra:

"Thus, Ananda, you should know that the perception of sweetness, bitterness, and tastelessness does not come from sweetness or bitterness, nor does it exist because of tastelessness, nor does it arise from the sense organ, nor is it produced from emptiness.

Commentary:

This is the same principle as was stated above. **"Thus, Ananda, you should know that the perception"** – the tasting that was explained above – **"of sweetness, bitterness, and tastelessness** – when your own tongue recognizes the flavor of bitterness and of tastelessness – **does not come from sweetness or bitterness."** It is not from the flavors of bitterness and sweetness that the recognition arises. **"Nor does it exist because of tastelessness."** Nor is it because of tastelessness that there is that kind of recognition. **"Nor does it arise from the sense organ."** It is also not produced from the tongue. **"Nor is it produced from emptiness."**

Sutra:

"For what reason? If it came from sweetness and bitterness, it would cease to exist when tastelessness was experienced, so how could it recognize tastelessness? If it arose from tastelessness, it would vanish when the flavor of sweetness was tasted, so how could it perceive the two flavors, sweet and bitter?

Commentary:

“Why? If it came from sweetness and bitterness” – if the nature which recognizes tastes came from sweetness and bitterness **– “it would cease to exist when tastelessness was experienced.”** There would be no recognition of tastelessness. **“So how could it recognize tastelessness?”** Then how would one know the flavor of tastelessness? **“If it arose from tastelessness” –** if the taste recognizing nature arose from tastelessness **– “it would vanish when the flavor of sweetness was tasted.”** The nature that recognizes sweetness would disappear. **“So how could it perceive the two flavors, sweet and bitter?”** If, in fact, there were no recognition of sweetness, how could he still know of the two characteristics of sweetness and bitterness?

Sutra:

“Suppose it came from the tongue which is obviously devoid of the defiling objects of sweetness and bitterness and of tastelessness. An essence of tasting such as this would have no self nature.

Commentary:

“Suppose it came from the tongue which is obviously devoid of the defiling objects of sweetness and bitterness and of tastelessness.” If it came from the tongue, there would not be the flavors of sweetness and tastelessness, and bitterness. Why not? The tongue itself doesn’t have a flavor of sweetness or tastelessness or of bitterness. **“An essence of tasting such as this would have no self nature.”** The taste recognizing nature would not have a self nature.

Sutra:

“Suppose it came from emptiness: the sense of taste would be experienced by emptiness instead of by the mouth. Suppose, moreover, that it was emptiness itself which tasted; what connection would that have with your entrance?

Commentary:

"Suppose it came from emptiness." If the taste recognizing nature came from within emptiness, **"the sense of taste would be experienced by emptiness instead of by the mouth."** Emptiness would naturally know what it tastes; how would you know? If the taste recognizing nature tastes were to come from emptiness, emptiness itself would recognize them, and your mouth would not be able to recognize them. **"Suppose, moreover, that it was emptiness itself which taste" –** if emptiness itself knew of this taste recognizing nature, **"what connection would that have with your entrance?"** It wouldn't have any connection with your tongue entrance.

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that the tongue entrance is empty and false since it neither depends upon causes and conditions for existence nor is it spontaneous in nature.

Commentary:

"Therefore, because of that, **you should know,** Ananda. Don't continue to be so confused; don't continue to be so stupid; don't continue to be so unclear. You ought to know that the **tongue entrance is empty and false."** It is an empty falseness. It is not counted as causes and conditions. **"It neither depends upon causes and conditions for existence nor is it spontaneous in nature."** It, too, is produced from within the true nature of Bodhi, the wonderful nature of true suchness of the Thus Come One's Treasury.

P5 The body entrance.
Q1 Brings up an example to reveal the false.

Sutra:

"Ananda, consider, for example, a person who touches his warm hand with his cold hand. If the cold is in excess of the

warmth, the warm hand will become cold; if the warmth is in excess of the cold, his cold hand will become warm. So the sensation of warmth and cold is felt through the contact and separation of the two hands. Fatiguing contact results in the interpenetration of warmth and cold. However, both the body and the fatigue originate in Bodhi. Protraction produces the characteristic of fatigue.

Commentary:

"Ananda, consider, for example, a person who touches his warm hand with his cold hand. If the cold is in excess of the warmth" – the cold is more powerful **– "his the warm hand will become cold."** The warm hand will be cold, too. **"If the warmth is in excess of the cold, his cold hand will become warm."** The cold hand will turn warm. **"So the sensation of warmth and cold is felt through the contact and separation of the two hands."** The contact of the cold and warm hands involves an awareness of union. The knowledge of contact and the separation which is called lack of contact are manifested. **"Fatiguing contact results in the interpenetration of warmth and cold."** If the characteristics of cold and warmth are brought about, it is because of fatigue which results from the contact of the two hands. **"The body and the fatigue originate in Bodhi."** The body and the awareness of touch are both Bodhi. **"Protraction produces the characteristic of fatigue."** This is a case of protraction within the true nature of Bodhi giving rise to the characteristic of fatigue.

Q2 Explains that the false has no substance.

Sutra:

"Because a physical sensation is stimulated in the midst of the two defiling objects of separation and union, defiling appearances are taken in; this is called the awareness of sensation. Apart from the two sets of defiling objects of separation and union, and pleasantness and unpleasantness, the awareness of sensation is originally without a substance.

Commentary:

"Because a physical sensation is stimulated in the midst of the two defiling objects of separation and union, defiling appearances are taken in; this is called the awareness of sensation." Because there is separation and union these two kinds of sensations of contact, these two kinds of false, defiling objects – a feeling arises within them, and the body's two hands draw in the feeling of these defiling appearances, the separation and the union. **"Apart from the two sets of defiling objects of separation and union, and pleasantness and unpleasantness, the awareness of sensation is originally without a substance."** "Unpleasant" refers to a state of suffering; "pleasant" refers to a state of bliss. That which one likes is a state of bliss. That which one dislikes is a state of suffering. So apart from the two defiling objects of separation and union, the sensation of contact hasn't any fundamental substance, either. It hasn't a substance of its own.

Q3 It has no source.

Sutra:

"Thus, Ananda, you should know that this sensation does not come from separation and union, nor does it exist because of pleasantness and unpleasantness, nor does it arise from the sense organ, nor is it produced from emptiness.

Commentary:

"Thus, Ananda, from this **you should know that this** kind of nature of **sensation does not come from separation and union."** Although it is said that it senses the existence of the defiling objects of separation and union, the nature that is aware of sensation itself does not come from separation and union. **"Nor does it exist because of pleasantness and unpleasantness, nor does it arise from the sense organ" –** nor is it produced from the body, **"nor is it produced from emptiness" –** nor is it brought forth from emptiness.

Sutra:

"For what reason? If it arose when there was union, it would disappear when there was separation, so how could it sense the separation? The two characteristics of pleasantness and unpleasantness are the same way.

Commentary:

"For what reason?" What is the principle? **"If it arose when there was union" –** if it were because of union that one had the nature that is aware of sensation – **"it would disappear when there was separation."** When the palms separated, there would no longer be a nature that was aware of sensation; yet the nature is still there. **"So how could it sense the separation?"** If it were extinguished when there was separation, how could you still sense the separation? **"The two characteristics of pleasantness and unpleasantness are the same way."** States of suffering and states of bliss follow the same principle.

Sutra:

"Suppose it came from the sense organ, which is obviously devoid of the four characteristics of union, separation, pleasantness, and unpleasantness; an awareness of physical sensation such as this would have no self nature.

Commentary:

"Suppose it came from the sense organ – if you want to say that the awareness of contact comes from the body – **which is obviously devoid of the four characteristics of union, separation, pleasantness, and unpleasantness."** How is it shown that sensation is not produced from the body? If it were, the body would have no way to be aware of union, of separation, of what is disagreeable, or of what is agree able. **"An awareness of physical sensation such as this" –** your awareness of yourself – **"would have no self nature."** The nature that is aware of sensation would not have a self-nature, either.

Sutra:

"Suppose it came from emptiness; the awareness of sensations would be experienced by emptiness itself, what connection would that have with your entrance?

Commentary:

"Suppose it came from emptiness – if you then say that this nature that is aware of sensation is produced from within emptiness; **the awareness of sensations would be experienced by emptiness itself, what connection would that have with your entrance?** It would have no connection with your body entrance. Since all these various propositions are not possible, what conclusion is to be drawn?"

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

Sutra:

"Therefore you should know that the body entrance is empty and false, since it neither depends upon causes and conditions for existence, nor is spontaneous in nature.

Commentary:

"Therefore you should know that the body entrance is empty and false – because of that, you, Ananda, should know that the realm of the body entrance is also an empty falseness. **Since it neither depends upon causes and conditions for existence, nor is spontaneous in nature."** It is also produced from within the wonderful true nature of Bodhi.

P6 The mind entrance.
Q1 Brings up example to reveal the false.

Sutra:

"Ananda, consider, for example, a person who becomes so fatigued that he goes to sleep. Having slept soundly, he awakens and tries to recollect what he experienced while asleep. He recalls some things and forgets others. Thus, his upside-downness goes through production, dwelling, change, and

extinction, which are taken in and returned to a center habitually, each following the next without ever being overtaken. This is known as the mind organ or intellect. The mind and the fatigue are both Bodhi. Persistence produces the characteristic of fatigue.

Commentary:

"Ananda, consider, for example, a person who becomes so fatigued that he goes to sleep." He's too tired and wants to sleep. **"Having slept soundly, he awakens and tries to recollect what he experienced while asleep. He recalls some things and forgets others."** When he wakes up, he sees the defiling objects before him, and he will be able to think about some of the experiences he encountered and unable to think about others because he has forgotten them. **"Thus, his upside-downness" –** this is upside-downness in the mental process, and in it are the four aspects of **"production, dwelling, change, and extinction."** Take sleeping, for example: thinking about going to sleep is production. Actual sleeping is dwelling. On the verge of waking from sleep is the state of change. Having awakened and not wishing to sleep any more is the extinction of sleep. So, within sleeping itself there is production, dwelling, change, and extinction. There is also production, dwelling, change, and extinction in people's thoughts. First thinking of something is production. Dwelling is your actually thinking about, your pursuing the false thought you struck up. Change is when you finish thinking about it. Extinction is when you are no longer thinking of it. Just within one thought there are the four divisions. The Buddhadharma is inexhaustible and unending, once you look into it deeply. Take a telephone call, for example. Production is the phone ringing; dwelling is when you are talking on the phone; change is when you are about to complete the call; and extinction is when you have finished speaking. There is production, dwelling, change, and extinction to everything, no matter what it is.

There is production, dwelling, change, and extinction in the human lifespan, as well. One's birth is production. One has a period of dwelling in the world. Sickness is change, and death is extinction. But, does a person return to emptiness after one process of production, dwelling, change, and extinction? No. There is still the production, dwelling, change, and extinction of future lives. In a future life the environment changes, but there is still production, dwelling, change, and extinction. So production, dwelling, change, and extinction is a very important concept within Buddhism. Absolutely anything can be used to illustrate the principle. This table is another example. When this piece of wood was growing it was sealed with the destiny to become this table; that is production. Dwelling is when it was made into the table. It will not always remain as it is now, and after a long period of use it will fall apart, and that is change. Once it falls apart it cannot be used any longer, so it is burned, and that is extinction.

Worlds also undergo production, dwelling, change, and extinction. A world takes a long time to undergo production. It takes twenty small kalpas to produce a world. It dwells for twenty small kalpas. It undergoes destruction for twenty small kalpas, and it is empty for twenty small kalpas. That is production, dwelling, destruction, and emptiness, which is the same as production, dwelling, change, and extinction.

How many years is a kalpa?

It is 139,600 years. A thousand kalpas is counted as one small kalpa. Twenty small kalpas count as one medium kalpa. Four medium kalpas make one great kalpa. Production, dwelling, destruction, and emptiness take a great kalpa. Our knowledge of history reaches back for only a few thousand years – not even the extent of a single kalpa. The reach of our knowledge is very small. Kalpas, too, have production, dwelling, destruction, and emptiness – production, dwelling, change, and extinction.

"Taken in and returned to a center habitually." The mind takes in the defiling appearances of production, dwelling, change,

and extinction, in this case during sleep. These appearances return to the organ of the human mind, **"each following the next without ever being overtaken."** The production, dwelling, change, and extinction of thoughts in the mind are like waves on water.

"This is known as the mind organ or intellect." Of the six organs of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, the mind is now being discussed. **"The mind and the fatigue are both Bodhi. Persistence produces the characteristic of fatigue."** This is also a perseverance within the true nature of Bodhi which produces the characteristic of fatigue.

Q2 Explains that the false has no substance.

Sutra:

"The two defiling objects of production and extinction stimulate a sense of knowing which in turn grasps these inner sense data, reversing the flow of seeing and hearing. Before the flow reaches the ground it is known as the faculty of intellect.

Commentary:

"The two defiling objects of production and extinction stimulate a sense of knowing." The defiling objects of the mind lie within the mind. The mind conditions dharmas which are subject to production and extinction. There are also dharmas which are not subject to production and extinction, but the dharmas conditioned by the mind are dharmas of production and extinction, which are defiling objects. A nature of aware knowing accumulates and dwells in their midst, and **"in turn grasps these inner sense data."** "Grasps" here means the same as "taking in," mentioned above. **"Reversing the flow of seeing and hearing."** The defiling objects of seeing and hearing revert to the sixth mind consciousness. "Before the flow reaches the ground" – before this reverting current has reached the eighth mind consciousness, **"it is known as the faculty of intellect."** Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, bodily sensation, and knowing: the sixth of these consciousnesses is the knowing awareness nature in the organ of the mind.

“Before the flow reaches the ground” can also refer to the reverting current flowing back into the mind. What is the reverting current? When the mind’s thought conditions dharmas, it is as if there is a current which flows back into the mind. Before the flow reaches the eighth consciousness, there is a nature of aware knowing in the sixth mind consciousness.

Sutra:

“Apart from the two sets of defiling objects of waking and sleeping and of production and extinction, the faculty of intellect is originally without substance.

Commentary:

“Apart from the two sets of defiling objects of waking and sleeping” – of being asleep and of being awake – **“and of production and extinction” –** and of the two defiling objects of production and extinction – **“the faculty of intellect is originally without substance.”** It, too, does not have a substantial nature.

Q3 It has no source.

Sutra:

“Thus, Ananda, you should know that the faculty of intellect does not come from waking, sleeping, production, or extinction, nor does it arise from the sense organ, nor is it produced from emptiness.

Commentary:

“Thus, Ananda – from the doctrine which has been explained, Ananda, **you should know that the faculty of intellect –** the nature of aware knowing – **does not come from waking, sleeping, production, or extinction, nor does it arise from the sense organ –** nor does it come out of the organ of the mind. **Nor is it produced from emptiness.”** Nor is it produced from within emptiness.

Sutra:

“For what reason? If it came from waking, it would disappear at the time of sleeping, so how could it experience

sleep? If it came from production, it would cease to exist at the time of extinction, so how could it undergo extinction? If it came from extinction it would disappear at the time of production, so how could it know about production?

Commentary:

"For what reason? If it came from waking" – if the nature of aware knowing arose when one was awake **– "it would disappear at the time of sleeping."** It would disappear when one is asleep, and **"how could it experience sleep?"** If it weren't there when one was asleep, what would be meant by sleep? **"If it came from production, it would cease to exist at the time of extinction."** When there was extinction, it would be gone, **"so how could it undergo extinction?"** Who is it who would undergo extinction? **"If it came from extinction it would disappear at the time of production, so how could it know about production?"** In that case, it would cease to be when there was production. Without the nature of aware knowing, who would know there was production?

Sutra:

"Suppose it came from the sense organ; waking and sleeping cause only a physical opening and closing respectively. Apart from these two movements, the faculty of intellect is as unsubstantial as flowers in space, because it is fundamentally without a self nature.

Commentary:

"Suppose it came from the sense organ – if you say it comes from the organ of the mind, then **waking and sleeping –** these two characteristics **– cause only a physical opening and closing respectively."** There is an opening and closing in accord with your own body. **"Apart from these two movements of wakefulness and sleep the faculty of intellect is as unsubstantial as flowers in space, because it is fundamentally without a self nature."** Apart from the opening and closing, it is the same as nonexistent. It has no self-nature.

Sutra:

"Suppose it came from emptiness; the sense of intellect would be experienced by emptiness instead of by the mind. Then what connection would that have with your entrance?

Commentary:

"Suppose it came from emptiness" – if it were emptiness that produced the nature of aware knowing **– "the sense of intellect would be experienced by emptiness instead of by the mind."** If it were emptiness itself that knew, **"Then what connection would that have with your entrance?"** What connection would that have with you?

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that the mind entrance is empty and false, since it neither depends upon causes and conditions for existence nor is spontaneous in nature.

Commentary:

"Therefore, you should know that the mind entrance is empty and false." The mind entrance is also an empty falseness. **"Since it neither depends upon causes and conditions for existence" –** it is not produced from causes and conditions **– "nor is spontaneous in nature."** Ultimately, then, why do you have a nature of aware knowing? It is produced from a persistence within the nature of the wonderful true suchness of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, which gives rise to the characteristic of fatigue.

CHAPTER 4

The Twelve Places

N3 The twelve places are the Treasury of the Thus Come One.
O1 A general statement.

Sutra:

“Moreover, Ananda, why do I say that the twelve places are basically the wonderful nature of true suchness, the Treasury of the Thus Come One?

Commentary:

“Moreover, Ananda, I will explain it further for you. You should listen carefully. **Why do I say that the twelve places are basically the wonderful nature of true suchness, the Treasury of the Thus Come One?”** A “place” refers to a specific location. What are these twelve places? They are the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind – they make six – and forms, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas – another six; together they make twelve places. Sometimes they are also called the twelve entrances, like the six entrances mentioned above. But, the twelve places also include forms, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas. The combination of the six sense organs and six defiling objects are called the twelve places.

O2 A specific explanation.
P1 The place of the eye and form.
Q1 Sets the scene to discuss the organ and object.

Sutra:

"Ananda, look again at the trees in the Jeta Grove and the fountains and pools.

Commentary:

Take a look at Prince War Victor's Grove of trees.

Q2 Asks which gives rise to which.

Sutra:

"What do you think? Do these things come into being because the forms are produced and thus the eyes see, or because the eyes produce the characteristics of form?

Commentary:

"What do you think?" The Buddha asks Ananda's opinion. **"Do these things come into being because the forms are produced and thus the eyes see, or because the eyes produce the characteristics of form?** Is it that the forms are produced and the eyes see them, or is it that the eyes produce these characteristics of form? Explain this doctrine for me. I'll listen." The Buddha has another question, and I believe that by now Ananda has a bit of a headache. How do I know that? Because he didn't say anything. He didn't answer. So the Buddha continues:

Q3 Discusses each and refutes both.
R1 Refutes the possibility that the eyesight gives rise to form.

Sutra:

"Ananda, if the organ of sight were to produce the characteristics of form, then the nature of form would be obliterated when you see emptiness, which is not form. Once it was obliterated, everything that is manifest would disappear. Since the characteristics of form would then be absent, who would be

able to understand the nature of emptiness? The same is true of emptiness.

Commentary:

“Ananda, if the organ of sight were to produce the characteristics of form – if you say that the existence of the organ of sight produces the external defiling objects, the characteristics of form – **then the nature of form would be obliterated when you see emptiness, which is not form. Once it was obliterated, everything that is manifest would disappear.”** The nature of form would disappear, and when the characteristics of form were obliterated, everything would disappear. **“Since the characteristics of form would then be absent, who would be able to understand the nature of emptiness?”** Who could know of emptiness? **“The same is true of emptiness.”** The proposition that the eye produces the characteristic of emptiness would be wrong for the same reasons.

R2 Refutes the possibility that form gives rise to the eyesight.

Sutra:

“If, moreover, the defiling objects of form were to produce the eye’s seeing, then seeing would perish upon looking at emptiness, which is not form, and once it perished, everything would disappear. Then who would be able to understand emptiness and form?

Commentary:

“If, moreover, the defiling objects of form were to produce the eye’s seeing – if you want to say that forms produce the eyes’ seeing, then when there isn’t any form the eyes could not see, **then seeing would perish upon looking at emptiness, which is not form.** Emptiness is not form. It has no form or appearance. If you postulate that seeing is produced from forms, then you should not be able to see emptiness, and when there was no form, there would not be any seeing. **Once it,** the seeing, **perished, everything would disappear.”** When the seeing was gone, nothing could be seen.

"Then who would be able to understand emptiness and form? Who would know that one thing was emptiness and that something else was form? If there were no seeing, who could know?"

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that neither seeing nor form nor emptiness has a location, and thus the two places of form and seeing are empty and false. Their origin is not in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.

Commentary:

"Therefore, because of this, Ananda, **you should know that neither seeing nor form nor emptiness has a location, and thus the two places of form and seeing –** now just as to form and seeing, both places **are empty and false."** Form has no nature of its own, and the seeing has no nature of its own, either. **"Their origin is not in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously."** Rather, they are false views which are produced from within the wonderful nature of true suchness of the Thus Come One's Treasury.

P2 The place of the ear and sound.
Q1 Sets the scene to discuss the organ and object.

Sutra:

"Ananda, listen again to the drum being beaten in the Jeta Garden when the food is ready. The Assembly gathers as the bell is struck. The sounds of the bell and the drum follow one another in succession.

Commentary:

This passage explains the two places of the ear and sound. **"Ananda, listen again to the drum being beaten in the Jeta Garden when the food is ready –** when the food has been prepared, the drum is hit, and everyone comes to eat. **The Assembly gathers as the bell is struck."** If you want to gather

together, you strike the bell. Nowadays, when it is time to eat, it is not a drum which is hit but rather an instrument called the "wooden fish." It is a hollow woodblock shaped like a big fish. When it is time to eat, the fish is beaten, and it makes the sound *bong*, *bong*, *bong*. So in Chinese it is called a *bong*. In a large monastery there are many monks, and if no signal were given, people wouldn't know it was time to eat. In fact, some might even be sleeping away the morning in their rooms, like certain disciples I have who are fond of sleep. If you didn't make some signal to wake them up, they would miss lunch. So in large monasteries where hundreds or even thousands of monks lived, the *bong* was hit when it was time to eat. It was beaten for a long time, and the louder the better. Why? To wake everyone up. And, as soon as people who were asleep heard the "bong," they leapt up, grabbed their robes and sashes, and hurried off to eat. When monks eat, they wear their formal robes and sashes, and they are very awesome and adorned. They do not talk while they eat. In the dining hall a thousand monks may be gathered together to eat, and not one of them is speaking. Everyone is silent.

When people have left the home life, they must abide by the rule of eating at one sitting. They cannot get up and then come back and sit down and eat more. When the dining hall attendant comes around, he will give you one more of whatever you have not had enough of. He'll give you as much as you want. If you want a bowlful, he'll give you a bowlful; if you want half a bowlful, you can indicate how much with your finger or your chopstick, and he'll give you that much.

In the past, an old cultivator who was a layman, not a left home person, had taken the five precepts and also the precept against talking while eating. But he had violated all five precepts, and there remained only the precept against talking while eating, which he had not violated. So the spirit who protected that precept still accompanied him, but he wished the layman would violate the precept so he could go, too, and no longer protect him. But the layman never violated the precept. When he ate, he never talked.

Finally, the spirit of the precept came to him in a dream and said, "You should talk when you eat. Since you've violated all the other precepts, why don't you violate the precept against talking when you eat? Hurry up and violate it, because I'd like to leave you, too."

The dream set the layman thinking. "I've kept that precept against talking while eating, and it turns out there is a precept spirit who protects me!" After that he found a Dharma Master with Way Virtue and took the precepts over again. As a result of that, he cultivated and accomplished the Way. Every person has his own particular causes and conditions, and in Buddhism taking the precepts is a very important matter.

It is said that the *bong*, which is hit when it is time to eat, was originally an evil man who became a fish in the sea. A tree grew out of the fish's body, and the fish made a practice of using the tree to bash in ships and wreck them. When a ship was wrecked the fish would eat the people. Later the fish met up with an Arhat who crossed it over, and afterward the tree was used to make a *bong* shaped like a fish. And that is why the *bong* is beaten when it is time to eat. It represents helping to wipe out that fish's karmic offenses, so the fish could be reborn as a human. There's no foundation in this, it's only a legend, and I'm just passing it along to you.

"The sounds of the bell and the drum follow one another in succession." Maybe the bell is struck first, or maybe the drum is beaten first. In any case, the sounds follow one another in succession.

Q2 Asks which gives rise to which.

Sutra:

"What do you think? Do these things come into existence because the sound comes to the region of the ear, or because the ear goes to the place of the sound?

Commentary:

In explaining about the ear, the Buddha has more to ask Ananda. He said, **"What do you think** about the sound of the bell and drum? What's your opinion, Ananda? **Do these things come into existence because the sound comes to the region of the ear?"** "These things" are the sounds of the bell and drum. "Do they come up beside your ear, and then do you hear? **Or because the ear goes to the place of the sound?** Or is it that your ear goes to the place of the sound?" He asks Ananda, and Ananda doesn't have anything to say in return. Ananda isn't as brash as he was before, when he had an immediate answer for everything that was asked. Now he doesn't make a sound. He waits for the Buddha to explain it.

Q3 Discusses each and refutes all possibilities.
R1 The possibility that the sound comes to the region of the ear.

Sutra:

"Again, Ananda, suppose that the sound comes to the region of the ear. Similarly, when I go to beg for food in the city of Shravasti, I am no longer in the Jeta Grove. If the sound definitely goes to the region of Ananda's ear, then neither Maudgalyayana nor Kashyapa would hear it, and even less the twelve hundred and fifty Shramanas who, upon hearing the sound of the bell, come to the dining hall at the same time.

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha said, **"Again, Ananda, suppose that the sound comes to the region of the ear. Similarly, when I go to beg for food in the city of Shravasti, I am no longer in the Jeta Grove."** The Buddha is referring here to himself. Shravasti is Sanskrit; does anyone remember what it means? I explained this at the very beginning of the Sutra, when I discussed the six realizations. You all have forgotten? Well, I can't remember it either. So we'll all just forget it, right? I never explained it, and you never heard it. No speaking and no hearing is true Prajna. The city of Shravasti had an abundance of the five desires and of wealth and

riches, and the people had the virtues of learning and liberation. So it is called "abundance and virtue." You should remember this. In Chinese, the Sanskrit *Shravasti* may appear as *she wei kuo* (舍衛國), or *shih lwo fa ch'eng* (室羅筏城). If you can't remember even that, this little bit, then when someone asks you to explain the six realizations, and when the fifth realization, place, is Shravasti, all you'll be able to say is "I don't know;" if someone asks you what Shravasti means. How much face will you lose then? You who are propagating the Dharma will suddenly find yourself stumped by a question. If someone should ask you some strange question, it is all right not to answer. But, if the question deals with something you should know about in the Buddhist Sutras, and you can't come up with the answer, it will be very embarrassing.

"When I go to the city of Shravasti to beg for food," the Buddha said, "I'm no longer here in the Jeta Grove." This is an example of the fact that something can't be in two places at once. "Thus, **if the sound definitely goes to the region of Ananda's ear, then neither Maudgalyayana nor Kashyapa would hear it.**" (The ear's going out to the sound is yet another possibility which will be discussed later.) "If the sound comes up beside your ear, Ananda, then Maudgalyayana, who was first in spiritual penetrations, and Kashyapa would not hear it. Why? Because the sound has come to your ear." The Buddha is really not speaking with any principle. Sound is basically all pervasive. Everyone can hear it, and yet he explains it in this way. He is deliberately trying to befuddle Ananda. He is not speaking reasonably to Ananda, just to see how Ananda will answer. **"Even less the twelve hundred and fifty Shramanas who, upon hearing the sound of the bell, come to the dining hall at the same time."** How much the less the twelve hundred and fifty bhikshus, who as soon as they hear the bell, all hurry in together to eat.

R2 The possibility of the ear going to the region of sound.

Sutra:

"Again, suppose that the ear goes to the region of the sound. Similarly, when I return to the Jeta Grove, I am no longer in the city of Shravasti. When you hear the sound of the drum, your ear will already have gone to the place where the drum is being beaten. Thus, when the bell peals, you will not hear the sound even the less that of the elephants, horses, cows, sheep, and all the other various sounds around you.

Commentary:

It was explained above that there is no principle in saying that the sound comes up beside your ear. If it were to come up beside your ear, other people would not hear it; and yet, in fact, the others can also hear the sounds of the drum and the bell. This proves that the sound of the bell and drum do not come to the region of your ear. "Again, suppose that the ear goes to the region of the sound. Perhaps you say that your ears go to where the sound is in order to listen to it."

"Similarly, when I return to the Jeta Grove, I am no longer in the city of Shravasti. Will you accept that doctrine, Ananda? Would you say I have spoken correctly here? You cannot argue with that principle. Therefore, **when you hear the sound of the drum, your ear will already have gone to the place where the drum is being beaten. Thus, when the bell peals –** then when the bell is sounded – you will not hear the sound. Your ear has already gone, so when there is another sound, you won't hear it, because what will there be to hear it? It's the same as when I return from the city of Shravasti; at that time I am no longer in the city. So you say your ear has gone; and yet, in fact, you still can hear. When the bell's sound rings out, you hear it as well as the drum. How can this be? **Even the less that of the elephants, horses, cows, sheep, and all the other various sounds around you.** Nor only is it the case that you can hear the sound of the drum and the sound of the bell, but there are the sounds of elephants, horses, cows, sheep – all kinds of

sounds that you can hear. Ultimately, has your ear gone out or not? Has your ear really gone to the place of the sound? If so, how is it that you have enough ears to go to the places of all those other sounds? You only have two ears: how can you have so many ears?"

R3 The possibility of there being no coming and no going.

Sutra:

"If there is no coming or going, there will be no hearing, either.

Commentary:

"If you say that the ear does not go to the place of the sound, and the sound does not come to the place of the ear – **if there is no coming or going –** then what do you hear? **There will be no hearing, either.** You wouldn't hear anything." What is this doctrine all about? It demonstrates that the wonderful nature of true suchness of the Thus Come One's Treasury is neither produced nor extinguished. It pervades everywhere and everything. It is not like a person, who when he is at one particular place is there, and when he leaves he is no longer there. Rather, it has neither production nor extinction. This demonstrates that the root-nature is true and that false thinking is false.

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that neither hearing nor sound has a location, and thus the two places of hearing and sound are empty and false. Their origin is not in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.

Commentary:

"Therefore – because of the principle I have just explained – **you should know –** Ananda, you ought to know – **that neither hearing nor sound has a location.** There is nowhere that the defiling sound objects and your awareness of hearing reside. They haven't any home. They are probably more or less like beggars –

they don't even have a place to live. **And thus the two places of hearing and sound are empty and false.** Both places are an empty falseness. **Their origin is not in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.** They are not produced from causes and conditions, and they are not produced out of spontaneity. They are a representation from within the wonderful nature of true suchness of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. So don't use the distinction making mind to indulge in making distinctions among these kinds of defiling objects."

P3 The place of the nose and smells.
Q1 Sets the scene to discuss the organ and object.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Ananda, you smell the chandana in this censer. When one particle of this incense is lit, it can be smelled simultaneously through forty li around the city of Shravasti.

Commentary:

Now the two places of fragrance and the nose with its awareness of smells will be discussed. **"Moreover, Ananda, you smell the chandana in this censer.** You sniff the burning incense burning. **When one particle of this incense is lit."** In Chinese the measure, one particle (*chu* 銖) is one twenty fourth of a *liang* (兩), and sixteen *liang* make one *chin* (斤), about one and a third pounds. So, one particle would be a very small piece of the incense. Chandana incense, also called "ox head chandana", is said to come from Uttarakuru the northern continent. When you light a very small piece of this incense its fragrance almost immediately pervades a radius of forty *li* – about thirteen miles. We are not speaking here of the smoke, which rises to the heavens, but of the fragrance which accompanies it. What is more, any pestilence or contagious disease is wiped out when this incense perfumes the atmosphere. The germs all disappear.

"When one particle of this incense is lit, it can be smelled simultaneously through forty li around the city of Shravasti."

Q2 Asks which gives rise to which.

Sutra:

"What do you think? Is this fragrance produced from the chandana wood? Is it produced in your nose, or does it arise within emptiness?

Commentary:

"What do you think? Ananda, what is the case here, in your opinion? **Is this fragrance produced from the chandana wood?** Does the chandana fragrance arise from the chandana wood? **Is it produced in your nose?** Or does it come from the organ of your nose? **Or does it arise within emptiness?** Or is it produced in emptiness?"

Q3 Discusses each and refutes all possibilities.
R1 Refutes the possibility that it comes from the nose.

Sutra:

"Again, Ananda, suppose this fragrance is produced from your nose. What is said to be produced from the nose should come forth from the nose. Your nose is not chandana, so how can the nose have the fragrance of chandana? When you say you smell fragrance, it should enter your nose. For the nose to emit fragrance is not the meaning of smelling.

Commentary:

"Again, Ananda, suppose this fragrance is produced from your nose. You say it is produced from the organ of your nose. **What is said to be produced from the nose should come forth from the nose.** If it is the case that it is produced from the organ of the nose, the fragrance should come out of your nose. **Your nose is not chandana.** But the organ of your nose is certainly not chandana wood. **So how can the nose have the fragrance of chandana?** There's no such principle. **When you say you smell fragrance, it should enter your nose.** If you say you smell fragrance, it is smelled by your smelling nature, and it should enter your nostrils.

For the nose to emit fragrance is not the meaning of smelling. If you say the fragrance comes out of your nostrils, then it is not right to say you can still smell the fragrance, because your nostrils can only smell what enters them. It cannot be that the fragrance is emitted by your nostrils."

Now, basically, everyone knows that the fragrance arises from the chandana wood. When the incense is lit, smoke rises into the air. However, the fragrance is certainly not the incense smoke, for as soon as the incense is lit, the fragrance can be smelled within a radius of forty *li* of where the incense was lit. The incense smoke, on the other hand, simply rises up into emptiness.

Why does the Buddha question Ananda in this way, asking him whether the fragrance of candana comes from the nostrils or from the chandana incense? Everyone realizes without its being explained that if the chandana incense is not lit, there isn't any fragrance, which proves that the fragrance comes from the incense. The Buddha is deliberately questioning Ananda in this way to see how he will answer. However, although the fragrance comes from the chandana, the nature of smelling comes from the Thus Come One's Treasury. So the meaning does not lie in the fragrance, but in the nature of smelling. The nature of smelling is all pervading and is neither produced nor extinguished. That is the important point.

R2 Refutes the possibility that it comes from emptiness.

Sutra:

"Suppose it is produced from within emptiness. The nature of emptiness is everlasting and unchanging, and so the fragrance should be eternally present. What need should there be to rely on burning the dry wood in the censer?

Commentary:

"Suppose it is produced from within emptiness. The nature of emptiness is everlasting and unchanging. If you say the fragrance comes forth from emptiness, **the fragrance should be eternally present.** The fragrance should always be there. It

couldn't disappear. It would not be necessary to wait until the chandana incense wood is burned in order for there to be the fragrance of chandana. It should also be there at ordinary times. **What need should there be to rely on burning the dry wood in the censer?"** "Rely on" means that one must burn the incense in order for the fragrance to come into being. This passage proves that the fragrance is not produced from emptiness.

R3 Refutes the possibility that it comes from the smell.

Sutra:

"Suppose it is produced from the wood. Now, the nature of this incense is such that it gives off smoke when it is burned. If the nose smells it, it should be filled with smoke. The smoke rises into the air, and before it has reached the distance, how is it that the fragrance is already being smelled at a distance of forty li?

Commentary:

"Suppose it is produced from the wood. Now, the nature of this incense is such that it gives off smoke when it is burned." When it is lit, it turns into smoke. **"If the nose smells it, it should be filled with smoke."** When the organ of the nose smells it, there should be some smoke there. But, this fragrance is not due to the smoke. **"The smoke rises into the air,** but the fragrance pervades all places. There is fragrance even where there is no smoke. **"And before it has reached the distance, how is it that the fragrance is already being smelled at a distance of forty li?** The smoke has not yet traveled the forty *li*, but the fragrance has already reached that distance, and everywhere within that area the fragrance can be smelled. Where would you say it comes from?" the Buddha asks Ananda.

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that neither the fragrance, nor the nose's smelling has a location, and so the two places of smelling and fragrance are empty and false. Their origin is not in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.

Commentary:

"Therefore, you should know that neither the fragrance, nor the nose's smelling has a location. Because of what has been explained, you should know that both the fragrance and the awareness of smelling have no location. They haven't any fixed place. **And so the two places of smelling and fragrance –** the awareness of smelling in the nose and the fragrance – **are empty and false. Their origin is not in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.** They are all representations which flow forth from the wonderful nature of true suchness within the nature of the Thus Come One's Treasury."

P4 The place of the tongue and tastes.
Q1 Sets the scene to discuss organ and object.

Sutra:

"Ananda, twice every day you take up your bowl along with the rest of the assembly, and among what you receive may be things of supreme flavor, such as curds, buttermilk, and clarified butter.

Commentary:

From whole milk comes buttermilk; from buttermilk comes curds, and from curds comes butter. Butter can be further refined into clarified butter, or ghee.

The first period of the Buddha's teaching of Dharma is called the Avatamsaka Period. The Avatamsaka Period is likened to the time when the sun is first rising, for when the sun first rises it first

illumines the high mountains. The high mountains represent the Great Bodhisattvas. The *Avatamsaka Sutra* teaches and transforms Great Bodhisattvas. So, when the Buddha spoke the Avatamsaka, those of the Two Vehicles, the Sound-Hearers and Those Who are Enlightened to Conditions, "had eyes but did not see." They could not see the Buddha manifesting the ten thousand foot Nishyanda body . Those of the Two Vehicles saw Shakyamuni Buddha as usual in the six foot body of an old bhikshu. They "had ears but did not hear the perfect sudden teaching." They did not hear Shakyamuni Buddha speaking the perfect sudden, wonderful teaching of the *Avatamsaka Sutra*.

The five periods of Shakyamuni Buddha's teaching are likened to dairy products. The Dharma of the Avatamsaka is like whole milk. Adults can digest whole milk, but infants cannot usually take whole cow's milk. The period of the *Avatamsaka Sutra* was devoted exclusively to the teaching and transforming of Bodhisattvas. It was like milk taken directly from the cow.

The second was the Agama Period. *Agama* is a Sanskrit word which is interpreted as meaning "incomparable Dharma," which means none of the dharmas of outside the Way sects can compare to it. It is also called Abhidharma, that is, the Small Vehicle. In the milk analogy, the Agama Period is likened to the buttermilk which can be made from whole milk. The nature of buttermilk is not so strong, and children can drink it as well. It is easy to digest. In the analogy of the rising sun, the second period is represented by the illumining of the mountain valleys, which means that the lower lands are also shone upon.

The third is the Vaipulya Period. In the milk analogy, this period is represented by the curds extracted from buttermilk. And in the analogy of the rising sun, the plains are now illuminated.

The fourth period is the Prajna Period. In the milk analogy, it is represented by the butter which is processed from curds. In the sun analogy it is close to the full light of noon.

The fifth is the Dharma Flower/Nirvana Period. It is represented in the milk analogy by clarified butter. The flavor of the *Dharma Flower Sutra – the Sutra of the lotus Flower of Wonderful Dharma, sometimes called the Lotus Sutra –* is as wonderful as the flavor of clarified butter. In the analogy of the rising sun, the *Dharma Flower Sutra* is the sun when it is directly overhead. At midday the sun shines on everything, illumining the high mountains, the valleys, and the plain.

The *Dharma Flower Sutra* is a most important Sutra in Buddhism. The *Shurangama Sutra* is for the opening of wisdom. The *Shurangama Sutra* points out the path, the way of cultivation. The *Lotus Sutra* is for accomplishing Buddhahood. Everyone in the Dharma Flower Assembly should become a Buddha. As the Sutra says, "With one recitation of Namo Buddha, all can accomplish the Buddha Way." The *Dharma Flower Sutra* is for opening out the provisional and manifesting the actual. In its doctrine, the empty and false are rejected, and only the actual is spoken. The Shurangama and the *Dharma Flower Sutra* are extremely important, extremely important in Buddhism. The doctrine of the *Dharma Flower Sutra* is the most esoteric and wonderful. Great Master Chih Che of the Tyan Tai School opened enlightenment while reading it.

Soon after he had opened enlightenment, he heard of the existence of the *Shurangama Sutra*, and he proceeded to face the west every day and bow to the *Shurangama Sutra*, hoping to be able to read it. But, although he bowed for eighteen years, he never did see it. Wouldn't you say that was regrettable? The practices which the virtuous patriarchs of China followed in displaying their respect for the Buddhadharma show how extremely reverent they were.

Some people bow to the *Dharma Flower Sutra* and the *Shurangama Sutra*. They bow once for every word, bowing all day long from morning to night. Some have become enlightened while bowing to a Sutra. Thus, there are all kinds of different methods of

cultivation. No matter which method you cultivate all you have to do is to do it single-mindedly. Don't cultivate on the one hand and strike up false thoughts on the other. For instance, I know there are some people here listening to the Sutra who are not really listening. They are thinking, "After a while I'm going to telephone my girlfriend," or "How am I going to answer that letter I got?" With their attention focused on these kinds of questions, how can they expect to have any response as far as the Buddhadharma is concerned? But, they still haven't awakened. They don't say, "Ah, now I am studying the Buddhadharma, and I should put everything down and concentrate my attention on studying the Buddhadharma." So, in the end they have no idea what I have been explaining. And sometimes, if they become aware of it, they say it is meaningless. That's the kind of fault they have.

Q2 Asks which gives rise to which.

Sutra:

"What do you think? Are these flavors produced from emptiness, do they come forth from the tongue, or are they produced from the food?

Commentary:

"Ananda, what is your opinion about the flavors of these curds, buttermilk, and clarified butter which you say are supreme? **What do you think? Are these flavors produced from emptiness?** Does emptiness bring forth these defiling objects of flavors? **Do they come forth from the tongue?** Are these defiling objects of flavor produced from the organ of your tongue? **Or are they produced from the food?** Or is it that the defiling objects of flavor arise from the things eaten?"

Q3 Discusses each and refutes all possibilities.
R1 Refutes the possibility that it comes from the tongue.

Sutra:

"Again, Ananda, suppose that the flavors came from your tongue; now there is only one tongue in your mouth. When that

tongue had already become the flavor of curds, then it would not change if it encountered some dark rock candy.

Commentary:

"Again, Ananda, what do you say this flavor is produced from? Is it produced from emptiness, is it produced from the tongue, or is it produced from the food? Tell me. **Suppose that the flavors came from your tongue.** You may say the organ of your tongue produces this flavor. Then when you ate something, say curds for example, the tongue would become the flavor of curds. **Now, there is only one tongue in your mouth. When that tongue had already become the flavor of curds, then it would not change if it encountered some dark rock candy."** Dark rock candy is made out of sugar cane, and it is as hard as a rock. It was probably an ancient method for making candy that created it. Your tongue has already changed to the flavor of curds, so when you eat candy it will not be sweet. Why? You only have one tongue, and so it will have only one flavor. You cannot change one tongue into so many flavors.

Sutra:

"Suppose it did not change: that would not be what is called knowing tastes. Suppose it did change: the tongue is not many substances, and how could one tongue know so many tastes?

Commentary:

"Suppose it did not change. If, when you ate dark rock-candy, it did not change to sweet, **that would not be what is called knowing tastes.** Then your tongue would not be functioning as an organ that recognizes tastes. Suppose it did change. Suppose that when you ate curds, for instance, there was the flavor of curds, and when you ate candy the flavor changed to sweet. Now, **the tongue is not many substances.** There is only one tongue-organ. **And how could one tongue know so many tastes?** If flavors came from your one tongue, how could you recognize so many flavors? And yet you can; so this argument doesn't hold."

R2 Refutes the possibility that it comes from flavor.

Sutra:

“Suppose it were produced from the food. The food does not have consciousness; how could it know tastes? Moreover, if the food itself were to recognize them, that would be the same as someone else eating. Then what connection would that have with what is called your recognition of tastes?

Commentary:

“Suppose it were produced from the food.” Suppose the flavor arose in the food. **“The food does not have consciousness.”** Edible things are devoid of awareness. They haven’t any consciousness. **“How could it know tastes?”** Since food hasn’t any awareness, any consciousness, how could it know tastes? **“Moreover, if the food itself were to recognize them” –** if it were the edible things that knew their own flavor **– “that would be the same as someone else eating.”** That would be the same as if it ate its own flavor. **“Then what connection would that have with what is called your recognition of tastes?”** How could that be called knowing the flavor of what one eats?

R3 Refutes the possibility that it comes from emptiness.

Sutra:

“Suppose it were produced in emptiness. When you eat emptiness, what flavor does it have? Suppose that emptiness had the flavor of salt. Then since your tongue was salty, your face would also be salty, and likewise everyone in the world would be like fish in the sea. Since you would be constantly influenced by salt, you would never know tastelessness. If you did not recognize tastelessness, you would not be aware of the saltiness, either. You would not know anything at all. How could that be what is called taste?

Commentary:

"Suppose it were produced in emptiness. Perhaps you want to say that flavors are produced in emptiness. **When you eat emptiness, what flavor does it have?** Taste it. take a bite of emptiness, and see what it tastes like. **Suppose that emptiness had the flavor of salt.** Say, for example, that emptiness tasted like salt. **Then since your tongue was salty –** since your tongue was turned salty by the salty flavor, **your face would also be salty, and likewise everyone in the world would be like fish in the sea.** If flavor arose in emptiness, it wouldn't just be your tongue that it imparted its flavor to. If it made your tongue salty, it would also make your face salty. Your body, too, would be salty, and so would everyone else's. If everyone's body were salty, then the people of this world would become like fish in the sea. They would all take on the flavor of salt. **Since you would be constantly influenced by salt –** you should realize that if you were constantly soaked and drowned in saltiness, **you would never know tastelessness.** You wouldn't know what was meant by tastelessness. **If you did not recognize tastelessness, you would not be aware of the saltiness, either.** Why not? If you were not aware of tastelessness, you wouldn't know about flavors, and since you wouldn't know flavors, you wouldn't be aware of salt. **You would not know anything at all.** You basically wouldn't recognize any flavor at all. **How could that be what is called taste?** Then why would you come up with a name and call it the defiling object of taste?"

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that neither flavors nor the tongue's tasting has a location; and, so the two places of tasting and flavor are empty and false. Their origin is not in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.

Commentary:

"Therefore, you should know that neither flavors nor the tongue's tasting has a location." They have no fixed place. **"And, so the two places of tasting and flavor are empty and false."** Tasting and flavor – just to speak of these two places – are emptily and falsely produced and emptily and falsely extinguished. **"Their origin is not in causes and conditions" –** they are not created from causes and conditions, **"nor do their natures arise spontaneously."** Nor are they created from spontaneity. They are a representation of the wonderful nature of true suchness of the Thus Come One's Treasury, and nothing more.

P5 The place of the body and touches.
Q1 Sets the scene to discuss the organ and object.

Sutra:

"Ananda, early every morning you rub your head with your hand.

Commentary:

Buddhist monks are supposed to rub their heads three times every morning, to see if they have any hair. If not, why not? Oh: they are monks. They are people who have left the home life. This practice was adopted because when Shakyamuni Buddha was in the world, the adherents of a lot of sects outside the Way took refuge with the Buddha. Afterward, the Buddha taught the monks to rub their own heads three times every day in order to help them remember that they were monks. Ananda was very attentive to the teachings, and so he faithfully put this instruction into practice every day at daybreak without fail. **"Ananda, early every morning you rub your head with your hand.** You rub your monk's head with your hand in order to help you remember why you haven't any hair." It is done to teach people not to forget what they are all about. The Buddha asks Ananda about it in order to begin his explanation of the two places of the body and the defiling objects of touch – the ninth and tenth of the twelve places.

Q2 Questions whether the awareness of touch is dual.

Sutra:

"What do you think? When there is a sensation of the rubbing, where does the ability to make contact lie? Is the ability in the hands or is it in the head?

Commentary:

"Where does the sensation of contact lie? Ananda, I'm asking you a question. When you rub your head, a sensation of contact arises. **What do you think? When there is a sensation of the rubbing, where does the ability to make contact lie?** Your hand is aware of the rubbing, and so is your head. Which is the one that is able to do the touching? Which is the one that is touched? **Is the ability in the hands or is it in the head?** Does the ability to make contact lie in the hands or in the head? Speak up."

Sutra:

"If it were in the hands, then the head would have no knowledge of it, and how could that be what is called touch? If it were in the head, then the hands would be useless, and how could that be what is called touch?

Commentary:

"If it were in the hands, then the head would have no knowledge of it. If you say the touch lies in the hands, then the head would not know when you rubbed it. **And how could that be what is called touch?** If the head does not know, it cannot be a case of touch. **"If it were in the head, then the hands would be useless.** If you say the power of touch lies in your head, then your hands would not be aware of any sensation. **And how could that be what is called touch?** Ananda, you explain it for me."

When the monks rub their heads three times, they recite a very meaningful verse, which I will recite for you.

Guard your mouth, collect your mind,
and do not commit transgressions with your body.

Do not bother any sentient being.
Stay far away
from non-beneficial ascetic practices.
One who cultivates like this
can save the world.

"Guard your mouth" means do not just say whatever you feel like. "Collect your mind" means keep your thoughts from wandering about. Don't engage in false thinking. Don't continually seek advantage from circumstances. "And do not commit transgressions with your body." Make sure you don't commit offenses with your body.

When the mouth is guarded, it is free of the four evils: it does not engage in abusive language, in lying, in profanity, or in gossip. With a collected mind, one has no greed, hatred, or stupidity. When no transgressions are committed with the body, one does not engage in killing, stealing, or sexual misconduct. Even thinking of such things is not permissible.

"Do not bother any sentient being." Don't cause any person or any living being whatever that you come in contact with to give rise to affliction. Don't give living beings trouble. Even less should you bother the people you are cultivating with. Sometimes you unintentionally make a mistake and cause someone else to be upset. In such a case you should find an opportunity to explain yourself and not just let the problem escalate.

"Stay far away from non-beneficial ascetic practices." These are bitter practices which are of no benefit, such as the way some people in India imitate the behavior of cows and dogs, sleep on beds of nails, or roll in ashes to cover their bodies with filth. What meaning is there in such practices? What aid is that in cultivating the Way? The filthier you are, the dirtier your mind is. When the outside gets dirty and you are always thinking about filth, your mind is also filthy. These are what are called "non-beneficial ascetic practices." Do not engage in them. You should do things which are of benefit to people. Do not do things which are of no

benefit to people. Stay far away from non-beneficial ascetic practices.

"One who cultivates like this can save the world." "Like this" means that you do not bother any sentient being, do not engage in non-beneficial ascetic practices, and do not practice the dharmas of sects outside the Way.

What is meant by the dharmas of sects outside the Way?

Shakyamuni Buddha practiced the Middle Way. According to his method of cultivation, he taught his disciples to eat vegetarian food, not to eat meat. Or, if they ate meat, to eat the three kinds of pure meat:

1) What I did not see killed. You did not see the animal being killed.

2) What I did not hear killed. You did not hear the sounds of the slaughter.

3) What was not killed for me. The pig or cow or sheep was not killed especially for me.

According to the Buddha's teaching, it is permissible to eat these three kinds of pure meat if one's body is not strong.

Thus, the Buddha taught his disciples to eat vegetarian food, and what do you suppose Devadatta did, with his deviant knowledge and deviant views? He thought, "Huh. You teach your disciples to eat vegetarian food, do you? I teach my disciples not to eat salt. They don't even eat salt." This practice also exists in Taoism, and is referred to as superior pure vegetarianism. Actually, it is not in accord with the Middle Way. But, that's the way Devadatta did it. The Buddha taught his disciples to not eat after noon. In the morning they ate rice gruel and at noon they had a full meal. Every day they ate twice, although the Buddha himself ate only once a day, at noon. He did not eat in the morning, and he did not eat at night. What did Devadatta teach his disciples to do? He taught them to fast for a hundred days. "You eat once a day? I eat once every hundred days. See how much higher I am than you? You

eat vegetarian food? I don't even eat salt. I'm always a bit higher than you." He constantly wanted to compete with the Buddha. He kept wanting to pit his dharmas against the Buddha's, and he always said that the Buddha could not compare with him. So Devadatta provoked King Ajatashatru into killing his father and mother and then told Ajatashatru to become the new king, saying that he himself would become the new Buddha, that Shakyamuni Buddha was the old, decrepit Buddha – Devadatta wanted to overthrow the Buddha so he could become the new Buddha. But, in the end he messed things up so badly that he fell alive into the hells. He just took his flesh body right along with him to hell. He was intent upon doing things differently from the Buddha, different from the way it is done in Buddhism. This is how sects outside the Way are. You could also say that Devadatta was battling to be number one. He wanted to be first. He wanted this and wanted that – and in the end his retribution was to fall into the hells! So it is useless to cultivate non-beneficial ascetic practices.

The ancients said about eating meat:

The pots of stew simmered
during hundreds of thousands of years,
Have brewed oceans of deep resentment
into hatred that's hard to contain.
If you want to know the reason
for the disaster of weapons and troops,
Try listening at the door of a slaughterhouse
to the haunting midnight cries.

"The pots of stew simmered during hundreds of thousands of years," refers to the meat broths and meat soups which people have been cooking day in and day out for hundreds of millennia.

The pots, "Have brewed oceans of deep resentment into hatred that's hard to contain." Resentment as vast as the sea is contained in those pots of beef stew. Such hate and resentment cannot be smoothed over. "If you want to know the reason for the disaster of

weapons and troops." In the past, only hand weapons were used in battle. It was not like the present, when rockets, bombs, and guns make it possible to strike from long range. Before, soldiers engaged in hand to hand combat. The way it is nowadays is much more vicious. If you want to know why there are wars in the world, "Try listening at the door of a slaughterhouse to the haunting midnight cries." Go to a slaughterhouse at night – go to a place where cows, pigs, and sheep are killed and listen to the sounds. What do you hear at midnight at a slaughterhouse? Nowadays, slaughterhouses are usually located far away from populated areas, and so the sounds are not easy to hear. But, we can think about it. People have killed so many living creatures! And, as those creatures are reborn as people, they will want to get revenge. That is why day by day the resentment deepens, day by day the resentment grows. There is no way to resolve it. It has reached the point that the cycle doesn't even wait for those who have killed to die and become animals before the revenge is taken, people have simply taken to killing off their own kind. You kill me, and I kill you. You killed me in a past life, so now I am going to kill you. The disaster of weapons and troops is based on killing, and nothing else. That is why Buddhism explains that we must refrain from killing. Instead, we should liberate life and take the precepts.

If one person refrains from killing, the world has that much less violent energy in it – that much less evil influence. If ten people do not kill, then there are ten spots of auspicious energy in the world. Those spots are devoid of negative influences and contain only positive ones. As with a single person, so with the entire world. If you are murderous and kill living beings, then living beings will not have any good feelings toward you. If you are kind to living beings, then the living beings will be good to you. Thus, there is a definite connection between the human realm and the realm of animals.

Time prohibits me from going into detail about this matter of refraining from killing, liberating life, and protecting the precepts. I could easily speak for three months on that topic alone. In fact, in

three years I couldn't exhaust the subject. But, I won't say any more now. I'll continue with the Sutra text.

Sutra:

"If each had it, then you, Ananda, would have two bodies.

Commentary:

"If each had it – if you propose that both your hand and your head have the ability to make contact, so that there is touch in both places, **then you, Ananda, would have two bodies.** You would have two bodies, because you would have two sensations of touch.

Q3 Questions whether the sensation of touch is singular.

Sutra:

"If there were only one touch in the head and the hand, then the hand and the head would be of one substance. If they were one substance, then no touch would be possible.

Commentary:

"If there were only one touch in the head and the hand – you proposed before that there were two powers of touch, one in the head and one in the hand; now you propose that there is only one power to touch – only one contact – not two. But, **then the hand and the head would be of one substance.** They would be one. If they were, there would be no sensation of contact. **If they were one substance, then no touch would be possible."** If there is only one touch in the head and the hand, how can touch be experienced? Do you see how this principle is being explained? – wonderful to the ultimate point.

Sutra:

"If they were two substances, to which would the touch belong? The one which was capable of touch would not be the one that was touched. The one that was touched would not be the one that was capable of touch. Nor should it be that the touch came into being between you and emptiness.

Commentary:

"If they were two substances, to which would the touch belong?" The Buddha has just shown that a single substance cannot be said to experience touch. "If, then, you propose that the head and hand are two substances, making two kinds of touch, in which one does the touch reside? The actual sensation of touch should lie in one of them. Which one is it? It is clear that one will be capable of touch, and the other will be the thing touched. **The one which was capable of touch would not be the one that was touched. The one that was touched would not be the one that was capable of touch.** You cannot say that they are both capable of initiating the sensation of touch. For instance, I am now touching this table. Basically the table hasn't any awareness; but my hand is the one that is capable of touch; while the table is the one that is touched. In the case of the hand and the head, though, which would be which? The one that was touched would not be the one capable of touch. The one that was capable of touch would not be the one that was touched. So, then, which would you say touched which? Would the hand touch the head, or would the head touch the hand? Speak up! **Nor should it be that the touch came into being between you and emptiness,** since empty space is basically nothing at all."

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that neither the sensation of touch nor the body has a location. And so the two places of the body and touch are empty and false. Their origin is not in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.

Commentary:

"Therefore, you should know – because of the various principles that I have just explained, you ought to know **that neither the sensation of touch nor the body –** neither the existence of a reaction to touch nor the body **– has a location.** The

sensation of touch does not have a fixed place. You cannot say for certain what it is like. **And so the two places of the body and touch –** the place of the body and the place of touch **– are empty and false.** They are not actual. Don't become attached to the objects of touch. Don't get attached and think, "So and so is the fairest of the fair," and give rise to greed and attachment. It's empty and false, so what are you doing getting attached to it?"

"Their origin is not in causes and conditions." The awareness of touch is not produced from causes and conditions, **"nor do their natures arise spontaneously."** Nor are they spontaneously produced from within emptiness. They flow forth from the wonderful nature of true suchness of the Thus Come One's Treasury. But, they are empty and false just the same. Don't become attached to them. You should return to your origin and return to your own Treasury of the Thus Come One. Put down those false characteristics, and return to your genuine basic nature.

P6 The place of the mind and dharmas.
Q1 Sets the scene to discuss the organ and object.

Sutra:

"Ananda, your mind is always conditioned by three qualities good, bad, and indeterminate which produce patterns of dharmas.

Commentary:

Now I will explain the doctrine of how the mind creates conditions for the defiling objects of dharmas. **"Ananda, your mind is always conditioned by three qualities."** There are conditions continually in your mind. What is meant here is seizing upon conditions. The most important thing that those who cultivate the Way must avoid is to seize upon conditions. Once the mind begins to seize upon conditions, obstructions are created. The sixth consciousness, the mind consciousness, goes haywire and its whole outlook becomes caught up in seizing upon conditions. Then it is not at all easy to cultivate the Way. No matter how many good deeds you accomplish, they are all phony if you accomplish them

with an attitude of seizing upon conditions. It is also phony if you take living beings across – no matter how many – with a mind that seizes upon conditions.

“Ananda, in your mind there are always conditions, **good, bad, and indeterminate.**” The “good” refers to all wholesome dharmas. The “evil” refers to unwholesome dharmas. “Indeterminate” refers to that which is neither good nor bad. “There exist these three natures **which produce patterns of dharmas.**” This refers to the ordinary reaction to the defiling objects of dharmas, not to Buddhadharma. “Patterns” means that fixed patterns emerge among the defiling objects, dharmas.

Q2 Asks which gives rise to which.

Sutra:

“Are these dharmas produced by the mind, or do they have a special place apart from the mind?

Commentary:

“Would you say that the dharmas that the mind creates conditions for are produced right there in the mind? **Are these dharmas produced by the mind, or do they have a special place apart from the mind?**” The “mind” here is the sixth mind consciousness. “Do they have a place apart from the sixth mind consciousness? Express your views on this. Speak up, Ananda.”

Now, Ananda does not chart the heights and fathom the depths. Ananda doesn’t dare to guess at the state of the Buddha. He doesn’t answer the Buddha’s question, so the Buddha calls to him again to make sure that he is paying attention. If Ananda were dozing off, the Buddha would be speaking in vain. So, he calls out to jar Ananda out of his dreams.

Q3 Cites dharmas to debate their falseness.
R1 Refutes that they are produced because of the mind.

Sutra:

"Ananda, if they were the mind, the dharmas would not be its defiling objects. Since they would not be conditions of the mind, how could you say that they had a location?

Commentary:

"Ananda, if they were the mind – if you propose that dharmas are simply produced from the mind, that they are the sixth mind consciousness – then **the dharmas would not be its defiling objects.** Then the dharmas your mind gives rise to would not be the defiling objects of the mind."

"Since they would not be conditions of the mind – what your mind seizes upon are the states of defiling objects. However, according to your argument these dharmas are not defiling objects; in that case, your mind would not be able to seize upon them. Then, **how could you say that they had a location?** Since there would be no conditions for them in the mind, how could they have a location? So, the dharmas the mind seizes upon have no location."

R2 Refutes that they exist apart from the mind.

Sutra:

"Suppose they were to have a special place apart from the mind: then would the dharmas themselves be able to know?

Commentary:

"Suppose they were to have a special place apart from the mind. They would be in another place. But, if they were in another place, **then would the dharmas themselves be able to know?** Is the nature of the dharmas such that they know they are dharmas? Speak up!"

Sutra:

“If they were to have a sense of knowing, they would be called a mind. If they were something other than you, they would be someone else’s mind, since they are not defiling objects. If they were the same as you, they would be your own mind. But, how could your mind stand apart from you?

Commentary:

“If they were to have a sense of knowing, they would be called a mind. Suppose you say that dharmas know – that they have knowing awareness; but what has knowing awareness is called the mind. **If they were something other than you, they would be someone else’s mind, since they are not defiling objects.** ‘Something other than you’ means that they would be separate from you. They would be apart from you. But, according to your argument, they are not defiling objects, either, because they have knowing awareness. If they were apart from you and had knowing awareness, **they would be someone else’s mind. If they were the same as you, they would be your own mind –** perhaps you insist that what is apart from you and yet has knowing awareness is actually your mind. **But, how could your mind stand apart from you?** If you explain it by saying that they are not someone else’s mind but are actually your own, why aren’t they one with you? If they have knowledge, then they are the mind; but, how can your mind and you be two different things?”

Sutra:

“Suppose they were to have no sense of knowing; yet these defiling objects are not forms, sounds, smells, or tastes; they are neither cold nor warmth, nor the characteristic of emptiness. Where would they be located?

Commentary:

“Suppose they were to have no sense of knowing. If you agree with the principle I have just explained, you will say they do not know. **Yet these defiling objects are not forms, sounds, smells, or**

tastes." They differ from the realms of the five defiling objects discussed above – form, sounds, smells, tastes, and objects of touch. What the Buddha is discussing now are the dharmas defiling objects which haven't any form, nor any sound, nor any smell, nor any taste. **"They are neither cold nor warmth."** Nor do they have the awareness of touch which knows separation, unity, cold and warmth. **"Nor the characteristic of emptiness."** Nor do they have the characteristic of emptiness. **"Where would they be located?** Then, where would you say the dharmas reside?" This is what the Buddha asks Ananda, but now Ananda does not dare answer.

Sutra:

"We have established that they are represented in neither form nor emptiness; nor is it likely that they exist somewhere in the human realm beyond emptiness, for if they did, the mind could not be aware of them. Whence, then, would they arise?

Commentary:

"We have established that they are represented in neither form nor emptiness." In the two kinds of defiling objects of form and emptiness, there is no representation of them. **"Nor is it likely that they exist somewhere in the human realm beyond emptiness."** It cannot be that the dharmas exist somewhere beyond emptiness. **"For if they did, the mind could not be aware of them.** Since the mind is not the dharmas which it creates conditions for, **whence, then, would they arise?"** Where are dharmas established? Who establishes them?

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that neither dharmas nor the mind has a location. And, so the two places of mind and dharmas are empty and false. Their origin is not in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.

Commentary:

"Therefore – because of this, Ananda **– you should know that neither dharmas nor the mind has a location.** These two have no place that can be found, either. **And, so the two places of mind and dharmas are empty and false."** In the doctrine of the mind conditioning dharmas, both places are empty and false. **"Their origin is not in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously."** They are an illusory falseness which arises from within the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

CHAPTER 5

The Eighteen Realms

N4 The eighteen realms are the Treasury of the Thus Come One.
O1 General statement.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Ananda, why do I say that the eighteen realms are basically the wonderful nature of true suchness, the Treasury of the Thus Come One?

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha said to Ananda, "How is it **that the eighteen realms are basically the wonderful nature of true suchness, the Treasury of the Thus Come One?**"

What are the eighteen realms? They are the eyes, ears , nose, tongue, body, and mind – that makes six – together with forms, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas, the six defiling objects, which are six more realms. To them are added the six consciousnesses: the eye consciousness, the ear consciousness, the nose consciousness, the tongue consciousness, the body consciousness, and the mind consciousness. These three groups of six are the eighteen realms. The six sense organs are matched to the six defiling objects, and between them are produced the six consciousnesses. The consciousnesses are defined as that which

makes distinctions. The sense organs are defined as that which grows, in that they are grown on our bodies. The defiling objects are defined by their quality of defilement. They are unclean, and they defile the nature of the six organs. When the six organs are matched with the six defiling objects, consciousnesses arise. The eyes see forms and make distinctions among them as being attractive or unattractive. They like the forms or they do not, and thus give rise to discriminations. With the ears it is the sane: they hear sounds as pleasing or displeasing. Either they like a sound or they do not like it. The production of such distinctions is called the ear consciousness. The nose smells fragrance and stench. The two defiling objects of fragrance and stench are distinguished as such. You may like some odors and dislike others, and in this way you give rise to a nose consciousness. The tongue distinguishes flavors. Because the organ of the tongue is matched to the defiling objects of flavors, there is the discrimination of flavor. Flavors are either pleasant or disgusting – you either like them or you don't. The body organ is matched with defiling objects of touch – smooth or abrasive, coarse or fine, various kinds of sensations, either pleasant or unpleasant. The body organ matched with the defiling objects of touch produces a consciousness which discriminates these sensations.

The organ of the mind is matched with the defiling objects of dharmas. The five defiling objects just discussed – forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and objects of touch – all have form and appearance. Only the defiling objects of dharmas are without form or appearance. There is no representation of them. Nonetheless, when the organ of the mind is matched with the defiling objects of dharmas, discrimination is produced in the mind, and so the mind also has a consciousness. In this way the six organs matched with the six defiling objects produce the six consciousnesses, and together they make up the eighteen realms. Although they are divided into eighteen realms, they are entirely contained within the wonderful nature of true suchness of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

O2 Specific explanation.
P1 The realm of eye, form, and consciousness.
Q1 Sets the scene to discuss organ, object, and consciousness.

Sutra:

“Ananda, as you understand it, the eyes and form create the conditions that produce the eye consciousness.

Commentary:

“Ananda, as you understand it – Ananda, it is like the principle which you have already understood **– the eyes and form create the conditions that produce the eye consciousness.”** The organ of the eye matched with the defiling object of form are the conditions.

Q2 Asks which gives rise to which.

Sutra:

“Is the consciousness produced because of the eyes, such that the eyes are its realm? Or is it produced because of form, such that form is its realm?

Commentary:

“As to this consciousness which is produced when the six organs match up with the six defiling objects: **is the consciousness produced because of the eyes, such that the eyes are its realm?**” Is it because of the eyes that the consciousness is produced, and does it take the eyes as its boundaries? **“Or is it produced because of form, such that form is its realm?”** Is it because of the defiling objects of form that the eye consciousness is produced, and does it take the defiling objects of form as its boundary?

Q3 Discusses them separately and together and refutes all possibilities.
R1 Refutes that it comes from the eyes.

Sutra:

“Ananda, if it were produced because of the eyes, then in the absence of emptiness and form it would not be able to make

distinctions; and, so even if you had a consciousness, what use would it be?

Commentary:

"Ananda, if it were produced because of the eyes – Ananda, if it were because of the eyes that the eye-consciousness was produced, then it would have no connection with form and emptiness. Thus, the causes and conditions of form and emptiness would be non existent with regard to the eye consciousness. **In the absence of emptiness and form it would not be able to make distinctions.** If there were no form and no emptiness, there would not be anything which was distinguished, either. This is because you have to be facing form for a distinction to be made. Or, if you are facing emptiness, a distinction can also be made. But, what you propose here is that there isn't any form or any emptiness. Then, what distinctions can be made? There isn't anything you can discriminate. **So even if you had a consciousness, what use would it be?** Just suppose you did have a consciousness; how could you use it? It would be useless."

Sutra:

"Moreover, your seeing is neither green, yellow, red, nor white. There is virtually nothing in which it is represented, therefore, what is the realm established from?

Commentary:

"Your seeing means your vision. Your eyes see forms and are able to produce a consciousness. Your seeing, which is capable of vision **is neither green, yellow, red, nor white.** It is not of those colors. **There is virtually nothing in which it is represented, therefore, what is the realm established from?** Where do you set up the realm?"

R2 Refutes that it is produced from form.

Sutra:

"Suppose it were produced because of form. In emptiness, when there was no form, your consciousness would be extinguished. Then, why is it that the consciousness knows the nature of emptiness?

Commentary:

"Suppose it were produced because of form. If you want to say, 'Ah, the eye consciousness is produced because of the defiling objects of form.' **In emptiness, when there was no form, your consciousness would be extinguished.** When there were no forms in emptiness and there was nothing for you to discriminate, your consciousness would be extinguished. If the eye consciousness is based on form, then when there are no forms to see, your eye consciousness should disappear. **Why is it that the consciousness knows the nature of emptiness?** How, then, do you know that it is emptiness? Since you are able to know that it is the nature of emptiness, your consciousness has clearly not disappeared. You still have it. Therefore, it is not based on form. So, where does your consciousness come from?

Sutra:

"Suppose a form changes. You are also conscious of the changing appearance; but your eye consciousness does not change. Where is the boundary established?

Commentary:

"You say that it is because of form that the eye-consciousness is produced. **Suppose a form changes. You are also conscious of the changing appearance.** You know that the appearance of the form is changing. **But your eye consciousness does not change.** But, your eye consciousness hasn't changed. **Where is the boundary established?** If it were produced from the form, your consciousness would change when the form changes. But it does not. So, where is the realm of the consciousness established? If conscious-

ness were produced from form, the realm would be established at the place of the form. But, when the form changes, your consciousness does not chase off after the form and change along with it. Ultimately, where is the realm of your consciousness?”

Sutra:

“If the eye consciousness were to change when form changed, then there would be no appearance of a realm. If it were not to change, it would be constant, and given that it was produced from form, it should have no conscious knowledge of where there was emptiness.

Commentary:

“If the eye consciousness were to change when form changed.” The way it was stated above was that the eye-consciousness does not change. “If you say that it does change when it encounters changes in form, **then there would be no appearance of a realm.”** Then there would be no realm. It would be constantly changing. **“If it were not to change, it would be constant.”** If it does not go along with the changes, it is there eternally. **“And given that it was produced from form” –** since it has been said that the consciousness is produced from form **– “it should have no conscious knowledge of where there was emptiness.”** If the consciousness were produced from something with characteristics and an appearance, it would not know where emptiness is, because its realm would lie within form. Belonging with things that have a material nature, it would be a kind of consciousness which would not know of emptiness.

R3 Refutes that it arises from a combination of the two.

Sutra:

“Suppose the eye consciousness arose both from the eyes and from form. If they were united, there would still be a point of separation. If they were separate, there would still be a point of contact. Hence, the substance and nature would be chaotic and disorderly; how could a realm be set up?

Commentary:

"Suppose the eye consciousness arose both from the eyes and from form. Suppose the organ of the eye, matched with the defiling objects of form, and they produced it together. **If they were united, there would still be a point of separation.** If the two together produced the consciousness, then when the two were joined, there would certainly be a boundary between them, because they would not be a single entity. You propose that the eye produces the eye consciousness and the defiling objects of form also produce it. The defiling objects of form have no knowledge, while the eye organ has a knowing awareness. What the form produces will be without awareness; what the eye organ produces will have a knowing awareness. When something that has knowing awareness unites with something that lacks it, their dissimilarity means that there certainly will be a boundary between them. There will still be a point of separation.

"If they were separate, there would still be a point of contact." If they are separate, half is the sense organ and half is the defiling object. One half has knowing awareness, and the other half lacks it. It is a combination of two things. **"Hence, the substance and nature would be chaotic and disorderly; how could a realm be set up?"** If it is explained this way, the substance and nature are scattered, and there can be no organization. Therefore, if in its basic substance it cannot be distinguished clearly, how can this realm of consciousness exist? The realm cannot be established.

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that as to the eyes and form being the conditions that produce the realm of eye-consciousness, none of the three places exists. Thus, the eyes, form, and the form realm these three do not have their origin in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.

Commentary:

“Therefore, you should know – because of this, Ananda **– that as to the eyes and form being the conditions –** the joining together of the eye organ and the defiling objects of form **– that produce the realm of eye-consciousness, none of the three places exists.** If you pursue this doctrine in detail, you will see that none of the three places has a location. **Thus, the eyes, form, and the form realm –** the organ of the eye, the form dust, and the eye consciousness **– these three – do not have their origin in causes and conditions.”** At their basis, they are not produced from causes and conditions. **“Nor do their natures arise spontaneously.”** They are a representation of the nature of true suchness of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

P2 The realm of ear, sound, and consciousness.
Q1 Sets the scene to discuss organ, object, and consciousness.

Sutra:

“Moreover, Ananda, as you understand it, the ear and sound create the conditions that produce the ear consciousness.

Commentary:

“Ananda, as you ordinarily conceive of it, **as you understand it, the ear and sound create the conditions that produce the ear consciousness.”** The organ of the ear hears the defiling objects of sound and together they give rise to causes and conditions. The ear consciousness is then produced. With the ear comes the production of a nature which makes discriminations, which is the ear consciousness.

Q2 Asks which gives rise to which.

Sutra:

“Is this consciousness produced because of the ear such that the ear is its realm, or is it produced because of sound, such that sound is its realm?

Commentary:

"Is this consciousness produced because of the ear such that the ear is its realm? What do you say? Is this consciousness called the ear consciousness because it is produced by the ear? **Or is it produced because of sound, such that sound is its realm?** Or is it produced because of sound, taking the defiling objects of sound to make up its realm? What do you say its realm is?" The Buddha challenges Ananda to understand his meaning, but Ananda doesn't have anything to say. The more the doctrine is explained, the more he feels he doesn't understand. So, once again he doesn't dare to speak. Shakyamuni Buddha continues:

Q3 Discusses them separately and together and rejects all possibilities.
R1 Refutes that it comes from the ear.

Sutra:

"Ananda, suppose the ear consciousness were produced because of the ear. The organ of hearing would have no awareness in the absence of both movement and stillness. Thus, nothing would be known by it. Since the organ would lack awareness, what would characterize the consciousness?

Commentary:

"Ananda, suppose the ear consciousness were produced because of the ear. Suppose you say that the ear consciousness was produced because of the ear. Yet, the two characteristics of movement and stillness must be present, perhaps one, perhaps the other. So, **the organ of hearing would have no awareness in the absence of both movement and stillness."** When the characteristic of neither movement nor stillness appeared, the ear by itself would not be aware of anything. By itself it would have no knowing awareness. **"Thus, nothing would be known by it."** The ear definitely would not know of the existence of the defiling objects of sound. If the two characteristics of movement and stillness did not exist, there would be no sound, and without any sound, obviously nothing would be known. **"Since the organ would lack awareness" –** since it would not be able to know, **"what would**

characterize the consciousness? Where would your consciousness come from? What would the consciousness be like? This consciousness does not exist either."

Sutra:

"You may hold that the ears hear, but when there is no movement and stillness, hearing cannot occur. How, then, could the ears, which are but physical forms, unite with external objects to be called the realm of consciousness? Once again, therefore, how would the realm of consciousness be established?

Commentary:

"You may hold that the ears hear. Suppose you say that the ear consciousness is not produced because of the ear, but rather that the ear has a nature of hearing and that, therefore, the consciousness is produced from within the nature of hearing. **But when there is no movement and stillness, hearing cannot occur.** If there isn't any sound of movement or of stillness, then you don't hear anything. Since you do not hear anything, hearing is not accomplished. You cannot call it hearing. **How, then, could the ears, which are but physical forms, unite with external objects to be called the realm of consciousness?** You can consider the ear to be among the defiling objects of form, and so how can they combine with external objects, which are also form, to produce a realm? This cannot be. **Once again, therefore, how would the realm of consciousness be established?** Then where, ultimately, would the realm of the ear consciousness come from? Would it be established with the ear or with the defiling objects of sound? It certainly should come from one or the other. Which one?"

Sutra:

"Suppose it was produced from sound. If the consciousness existed because of sound, then it would have no connection with hearing. Without hearing, then the characteristic of sound would have no location.

Commentary:

“Suppose you were to say that the realm of the ear-consciousness **was produced from sound. If the consciousness existed because of sound –** if the sound brings about the realm of the ear consciousness – **then it would have no connection with hearing. Without hearing, then the characteristic of sound would have no location.”** If there isn’t any hearing, then there isn’t any sound, and without sound the consciousness would be absent. When the nature of hearing is gone, the characteristic of sound is gone, too. Without any hearing, how can there be a consciousness, a hearing nature?

R2 Refutes that it is produced from the sound.

Sutra:

“Suppose consciousness existed because of sound. Given that sound exists because of hearing, which causes the characteristic of sound to manifest, then you should also hear the hearing consciousness.

Commentary:

“Suppose consciousness existed because of sound. Perhaps you want to say that the ear consciousness arises from sound. **Given that sound exists because of hearing, which causes the characteristic of sound to manifest –** we can say that sound exists because of the hearing nature; that is how the characteristic of sound arises. But, if that is the case, **then you should also hear the hearing consciousness.** The hearing should hear what its own consciousness sounds like. You say that the consciousness is produced from sound, that without any sound there wouldn’t be any consciousness; then, because you hear sound, you should also hear the consciousness.”

Sutra:

“If the hearing consciousness is not heard, there is no realm. If it is heard, then it is the same as sound. If the consciousness itself is heard, who is it that perceives and hears the conscious-

ness? If there is no perceiver, then in the end you would be like grass or wood.

Commentary:

"If the hearing consciousness is not heard, there is no realm. If the consciousness is produced because of sound, then there can be the consciousness when there is sound. When there is no sound there isn't any consciousness. When you hear the sound, you should hear the consciousness, and, by the same token, when the consciousness is not heard there will be no realm. **If it is heard, then it is the same as sound.** What is heard is sound. What you can hear cannot be called a consciousness; it is a sound. **If the consciousness itself is heard, who is it that perceives and hears the consciousness?"** The hearing consciousness has the ability to know. But, if the hearing consciousness has already been heard, whose consciousness heard it? Someone else's? Whose consciousness perceived the consciousness? Who is it who knew: "Oh, now I am hearing the consciousness." "**If there is no perceiver –** if you say no one perceives it, that there is no other consciousness which knows the circumstances of the hearing consciousness, **then in the end you would be like grass or wood.** If the hearing lacked perception, then you would be like grass and trees. So, this proposition will not stand."

R3 Refutes that it arises from a combination of the two.

Sutra:

"Nor is it likely that the sound and hearing mix together to form a realm in between. Since a realm in between could not be established, how could the internal and external characteristics be delineated?

Commentary:

"Nor is it likely that the sound and hearing mix together to form a realm in between. Nor can you say that sound and the hearing of sound mix together haphazardly, without their being distinguished at all clearly. In that way the boundaries of the realm

would be unclear, because things incongruous cannot be clearly marked to form an intermediate realm. **Since a realm in between could not be established –** thus, if there is no clear indication of the position of the realm, **how could the internal and external characteristics be delineated?"** The inside, outside, and middle of the ear consciousness realm are not delineated – the boundaries between the ear, the sound, and the point between them are not established anywhere. So, the consciousness can have no realm.

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that as to the ear and sound creating the conditions which produce the realm of the ear consciousness, none of the three places exists. Thus, the ear, sound, and sound consciousness these three do not have their origin in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.

Commentary:

"Therefore, because of this, **you should know,** Ananda, **that as to the ear and sound creating the conditions –** the mutual causes and conditions of the ear and sound **– which produce the realm of the ear consciousness, none of the three places exists."** The realm of the ear consciousness, the realm of the ear organ, and the realm of the defiling objects of sound are all non existent; they have no fixed location. **"Thus, the ear, sound, and sound consciousness –** the realms of the ear organ, of the defiling objects of sound, and of the consciousness of the existence of sound **– these three** realms **– do not have their origin in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously."** They, too, are nothing but representations from the wonderful nature of true suchness of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

P3 The realm of nose, smell, and consciousness.
Q1 Sets the scene to discuss the organ, object, and consciousness.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Ananda, as you understand it, the nose and smells create the conditions that produce the nose-consciousness.

Commentary:

"Moreover, Ananda, as you understand it. You have heard this teaching of the provisional vehicle before. The provisional vehicle discusses the five skandhas, the six entrances, the twelve places, and the eighteen realms. You understand all these doctrines. But, the eighteen realms were then described as expedient Dharma doors for those of the two vehicles and those of sects outside the Way, in order to take them across. Now I am going to discuss this doctrine with you in more detail. Don't become attached to these defiling objects of dharma."

"The nose and smells create the conditions that produce the nose-consciousness. The nose and smells together give rise to causes and conditions, which are that the nose smells a smell, and the smell comes to the organ of the nose. They together produce the conditions that give rise to the nose consciousness. When it does arise, where would you say it comes from in the last analysis? Ultimately, is there such an entity as a nose consciousness?"

Q2 Asks which gives rise to which.

Sutra:

"Is this consciousness produced because of the nose, such that the nose is its realm? Or, is it produced because of smells, such that smells are its realm?

Commentary:

"Is this consciousness produced because of the nose? Would you say the nose consciousness was produced because of the nose organ, **such that the nose is its realm? Or, is it produced because**

of smells, such that smells are its realm? What is the location of the realm of the nose consciousness?"

Q3 Discusses them separately and together and refutes them all.
R1 Refutes that it is produced from the nose.

Sutra:

"Suppose, Ananda, that the nose consciousness were produced because of the nose, then in your mind, what do you take to be the nose? Do you hold that it takes the form of two fleshy claws, or do you hold it is an inherent ability of the nature which perceives smells as a result of movement?

Commentary:

"Suppose, Ananda, that the nose consciousness were produced because of the nose. Suppose it were the nose organ that produced the consciousness which lies between the nose organ and the defiling objects of smells. **Then in your mind, what do you take to be the nose?** In that case, what do you consider to be your nose, when you think about it?" Basically a nose is a nose, and yet the Buddha still asks him what he takes to be his nose. Probably the Buddha was trying to get Ananda to say he took his eyes for his nose or his ears for his nose, but Ananda still did not understand this doctrine. **"Do you hold that it takes the form of two fleshy claws?** Do you hold that the nose is that piece of flesh which looks like two claws? **Or do you hold it is an inherent ability of the nature which perceives smells as a result of movement?** Or do you hold it is the awareness of smell, the ability to smell? When there is awareness of smells there is movement sniffing. Do you take this nature to be the nose?"

Sutra:

"Suppose you hold that it is fleshy claws which form an integral part of your body. Since the body's perception is touch, the sense organ of smelling would be named 'body' instead of 'nose,' and the objects of smelling would be objects of touch.

Since it would not even have the name 'nose,' how could a realm be established for it?

Commentary:

The Buddha said further to Ananda, **"Suppose you hold that it is fleshy claws.** Suppose you consider the nose consciousness to have the nature of flesh – **which form an integral part of your body."** Things which are flesh are part of the human body. **"Since the body's perception is touch" –** what the body is aware of is called touch; it is not called the nose consciousness – **the sense organ of smelling would be named 'body' instead of 'nose,' and the objects of smelling would be objects of touch."** What has the nature of flesh is the body and what the body is aware of is the defiling object of touch. **"Since it would not even have the name 'nose,' how could a realm be established for it?** In this case, there wouldn't be anything with the name 'nose consciousness.' Without even the name 'nose,' how could you establish a realm for it?"

The Buddha isn't being logical. We all know that we have noses. Now he's caused Ananda's nose to disappear. Ultimately, do people's nostrils point up or down? The Buddha didn't ask Ananda that, but now I am asking you who are studying the *Shurangama Sutra*: do you all know whether your nostrils point up or down? If you can answer that question, you will pass your monthly examination.

Sutra:

"Suppose you held that the nose was the perceiver of smells. Then, in your mind, what is it that perceives? Suppose it were the flesh that perceived. Basically, what the flesh perceives is objects of touch, which have nothing to do with the nose.

Commentary:

"Suppose you held that the nose was the perceiver of smells. Suppose you consider the perception of smells, that kind of knowing awareness, to be your nose consciousness. **Then, in your mind, what is it that perceives?** What do you take to be the

perceiver? **Suppose it were the flesh that perceived.** Do you say that you perceive smells with your flesh? **Basically, what the flesh perceives is objects of touch, which have nothing to do with the nose.”** What the flesh is aware of is called objects of touch. So, it can’t be called the nose.

Sutra:

“Suppose it were emptiness that perceived. Then emptiness would itself be the perceiver, and the flesh would have no awareness. Thus, empty space would be you, and since your body would be without perception, Ananda would not exist.

Commentary:

“Ananda, **suppose it were emptiness that perceived.**” The emptiness that the Buddha is referring to is the emptiness close to the nostrils. He proposes that the nose-consciousness exists at the place where the nostrils and the emptiness come together. **Then emptiness would itself be the perceiver, and the flesh would have no awareness.** If you took the emptiness to be the nose consciousness, which does the perceiving, then emptiness would know itself, while your flesh would have no awareness. **Thus, empty space would be you.** If you say that the consciousness is produced from emptiness, then emptiness would be your body, Ananda. Why? Because your consciousness would be in the emptiness in front of your nostrils. This emptiness would have self-awareness. If you don’t share this awareness, then it doesn’t have anything to do with you. But, if you do share it, if you know that it is a consciousness that makes distinctions, then your body would be emptiness along with it. **Since your body would be without perception, Ananda would not exist.** In that case, you, Ananda, would not even have a place to stand. There wouldn’t be any place for you, because, after all, you are emptiness.”

Sutra:

“If it is the smell that perceives perception itself would lie with the smell. What would that have to do with you?

Commentary:

"If it is the smell that perceives – if you say that your nose consciousness comes from the defiling object of smells, **perception itself would lie with the smell.** If it were the smell that produced the perception, then the consciousness would belong to the smell and not to you. So, **what would that have to do with you?** It wouldn't have anything to do with you.

Sutra:

"If it is certain that vapors of fragrance and stench are produced from your nose, then the two flowing vapors of fragrance and stench would not arise from the wood of Airavana or Chandana. Given that the smell does not come from these two things, when you smell your own nose, is it fragrant, or does it stink? What stinks does not give off fragrance; what is fragrant does not stink.

Commentary:

The word for "stench" in Chinese (臭) is pronounced *hsiu* or *ch'ou*. Basically, it should be pronounced *ch'ou* here, but when people hear that word they immediately get a bad impression, so here we will pronounce it *hsiu*. **"If it is certain that vapors of fragrance and stench are produced from your nose –** you say that pleasant and unpleasant smells are produced from your nose – **then the two flowing vapors of fragrance and stench –** that is, the fragrant scent and the unpleasant smell – **would not arise from the wood of Airavana or Chandana."** In this case, the stench would not be produced from the Airavana, which is a kind of tree with an extremely bad smell.

How bad does it smell?

The wood puts forth a stench like that of a three to-five week old corpse which is decaying under the blazing sun and can be smelled for a long way off. The red flowers of the Airavana are very beautiful but very poisonous, and if someone were to eat one of them, that person would immediately die. Chandana has been

discussed before. It is also called Oxhead Chandana, and it comes from Utturakuru, the northern continent. As soon as the fragrant chandana wood is lit, it can be smelled for thirteen miles. Sometimes the Airavana grows near the chandana, and when this happens the Airavana doesn't stink. This is an example of the ultimate stench becoming fragrance, and the ultimate fragrance becoming stench. The same is true of people. Places where there are only bad people have a kind of stench – everyone smells bad. But, perhaps there is a good person among them who exerts his influence and changes them all into good people; his presence is like the fragrance of chandana wood. When a thing reaches the furthest point there will certainly be change.

When stagnation reaches its furthest point,
peace comes along.

When something is as bad as it can get, it gets better. And, when things are as good as they can get, they go bad. For example, in this world, scientific progress has now led to a lot of discoveries, but when the discoveries reach their furthest point, the world will be destroyed. And, afterward, people will be totally ignorant. Then, after a time of ignorance, they will begin to discover things again, and when they discover a lot of things again, the world will be destroyed again. That's how this world is. It goes in cycles.

"Given that the smell does not come from these two things"– if Airavana and Chandana do not give off vapors, **"when you smell your own nose, is it fragrant, or does it stink? What stinks does not give off fragrance; what is fragrant does not stink."** If the smell is not good, then it is not fragrant. If it is a good smell, then it does not stink.

Sutra:

"Suppose you say you can smell both the fragrance and the stench; then you, one person, would have two noses, and I would now be addressing questions to two Anandas. Which one is you?

Commentary:

“Suppose you say you can smell both the fragrance and the stench – if you say that you yourself can smell and that what you smell is both fragrant and stinking, **then you, one person, would have two noses.”** Why? Didn’t the Buddha just say that what is fragrant does not stink, and what stinks is not fragrant? If you say you smell both smells, and if you say that smells are produced from the nose, then you should have two noses. How could your one nose smell two scents? “**And I would now be addressing questions to two Anandas.** After all, there are two noses, so there should be two Anandas whom I am questioning about the Buddhadharma. **Which one is you?** Which is your body?”

Sutra:

“Suppose there is one nose; then fragrance and stench would not be two. Since stench would be fragrance and fragrance would become stench, there would not be two natures, thus what would make up the realm?

Commentary:

“**Suppose there is one nose.** Perhaps you insist that there is just one nose, not two, saying that you haven’t two bodies, so you must have only one nose. **Then fragrance and stench would not be two.** Fragrance would simply be stench, and stench would be nothing but fragrance; there wouldn’t be any distinction between them. **Since stench would be fragrance and fragrance would become stench, there would not be two natures.** If the two scents of fragrance and stench mix together, neither nature remains. The fragrance isn’t fragrant and the stench doesn’t stink. Without these two natures, where would your realm of nose consciousness come from? Where could you establish its bounds?”

R2 Refutes that it is produced from smells.

Sutra:

“If the nose consciousness were produced because of smells, it follows that it is in existence just because of smells. Just as the

eyes can see but are unable to see themselves, so, too, if it exists because of smells, it would not be aware of smells.

Commentary:

"If the nose consciousness were produced because of smells – if you say that the nose consciousness is produced because of smells **– it follows that it is in existence just because of smells.** Suppose that the nose consciousness exists because of the smell of vapors. **Just as the eyes can see but are unable to see themselves –** the eyes' vision cannot return the light and illumine within to see themselves **– so, too, if it exists because of smells, it would not be aware of smells.** If it is because of smells that the nose-consciousness exists, then basically you should not be aware of smells in your nose consciousness. How could you still be aware of them? However, in fact, you are aware of smells, so it is not from smells that the nose consciousness is produced."

Sutra:

"If it is aware of smells, then it is not produced from smells. If it had no awareness, the realm of smelling would not come into being. If the consciousness were not aware of smells, then the realm would not be established from smells.

Commentary:

"If it is aware of smells, then it is not produced from smells. If there is an awareness of smells, then how could awareness arise from the smells? A nose consciousness both produced from smells and aware of smells would be like eyes which could see themselves. If you say it is aware of smells, then it is not produced from smells. On the other hand, if you say it has no awareness, it cannot be the nose-consciousness. Something that lacks awareness is not consciousness. The meaning of consciousness is that it makes distinctions; it must have awareness.

"If it had no awareness – for the defiling objects of smell are devoid of knowing awareness **– the realm of smelling would not come into being."** It cannot be that smells, which lack awareness,

are what establish the realm of nose consciousness. **"If the consciousness were not aware of smells, then the realm would not be established from smells."** Furthermore, it's been proved that if the nose consciousness comes from smells, it cannot also be aware of them. If it is aware of smells, then it cannot come about because of them.

R3 Refutes that it arises from a combination of the two.

Sutra:

"Since there is no intermediate realm of consciousness, there is no basis for establishing anything internal or external, either. Therefore, the nature of smelling is ultimately empty and false.

Commentary:

It has no location. Where would you say it arose from?" Since it is not produced from smells, nor from the nose, nor from emptiness, it is ultimately empty and false.

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that, as to the nose and smells being the conditions which produce the realm of the nose consciousness, none of the three places exists. Thus, the nose, smells, and the realm of smelling these three -do not have their origin in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.

Commentary:

"Therefore, you should know – because of what has been said, you should know, Ananda – **that, as to the nose and smells being the conditions –** the mutual causes and conditions – **which produce the realm of the nose consciousness, none of the three places exists."** There is no realm of the nose organ, nor is there a realm of the defiling object of smells, nor is there a realm of a smelling consciousness; none of these three realms exists. **"Thus,**

the nose, smells – the nose organ and the defiling object of smells **– and the realm of smelling –** the consciousness which enables you to be aware of the defiling objects of smell **– these three –** these three realms **– do not have their origin in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously."** They, too, are a manifestation of the wonderful nature of true suchness from within the Treasury of the Thus Come One. They definitely do not have a fixed location.

Don't be attached to the provisional Dharma doors which I spoke previously: the eighteen realms and the twelve places. All of them are empty, false, not actual. But, in order to draw in those of the Small Vehicle, it was necessary to explain all those Dharma doors, all those places. Basically, they do not exist. Now, in explaining this, I am explaining the Dharma door of the characteristic of reality – the primary truth, the great Shurangama Samadhi – and, so you cannot bring up all those theories I explained before and compare them to the Dharma door of the primary truth which I am now explaining. Thus, none of those realms discussed before holds up; they are not fully correct. They don't count as the Buddha's Dharma.

When there is a day without a lecture on the Sutra, don't just treat it as a vacation. If you do, your minds can become scattered. When you have a day off, you should keep your body and mind under control. Don't be too scattered. You should study with great intensity and not just do a passable job of things.

Further, there is the matter of taking precepts. At our *Shurangama Sutra* Cultivation and Lecture Session, there are people who wish to take the five lay precepts, the eight lay precepts, and the Bodhisattva precepts. Those who take the five precepts and the eight precepts are called Upasakas and Upasikas – precepted laymen and laywomen. Someone who takes the Bodhisattva precepts is called a Bodhisattva. People who have taken the Bodhisattva precepts are Bodhisattvas. Originally it was only left home people who received the Bodhisattva precepts, but

since the definition of a Bodhisattva is one who benefits himself and benefits others, laypeople can also take the Bodhisattva precepts. Receiving precepts is extremely important in Buddhism. All of you who want to take precepts should not miss an opportunity to do so. You can take one precept, two precepts, three precepts, four precepts, five precepts, eight precepts, and the ten major and forty eight minor precepts. Laypeople cannot take the ten precepts, because the ten precepts are for sramanera (novice monks and nuns). Receiving one precept is called taking the small half. Receiving two precepts is called taking half the precepts; taking three precepts is called taking more than half, and taking five precepts is called taking the entire five.

The first precept prohibits killing; but, if you cannot stop killing, you can take the second precept, which prohibits stealing. If you like to drink, like a drinking disciple I have, and you don't want to take the fifth precept, which prohibits taking intoxicants, you can take the precept against killing, the precept against stealing, and the third and fourth precepts, which prohibit sexual misconduct and lying. If you say, "I like to lie, I can't take the precept that prohibits lying," you can take the precepts against killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and intoxicants. Perhaps you say you can't stop killing – sometimes you unintentionally kill ants, or mosquitoes – and to take the precept and break it afterward would involve an even greater offense. Then you can decide against taking the precept that prohibits taking life. It is up to you. So, don't miss the opportunity.

I don't mind telling you that in China, if you want to receive precepts, you can't do it without paying two hundred dollars. Why? It is like a business. You certainly have to pay. The money I am speaking of is not the money used to buy the robe and sash which are worn by precepted disciples. That is something for you, and how much money you spend on that is your business. The two hundred dollars is charged as a payment to the Master and the temple. However, I don't charge. Whether or not you have money doesn't matter. In fact, I am giving a pair of Arhat shoes to all of you who have participated in the Shurangama Session. But, these

Arhat shoes are not meant to encourage you to practice the Way of an Arhat – to benefit just yourself and not to benefit others. They are meant to teach you to remember that Arhats are of the Small Vehicle, and that you should go down the path of the Great Vehicle. You should put on your Arhat shoes and practice the Bodhisattva Way.

P4 The realm of tongue, flavors, and consciousness.
Q1 Sets the scene to discuss the organ, object, and consciousness.
Q2 Asks which gives rise to which.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Ananda, as you understand it, the tongue and flavors create the conditions that produce the tongue-consciousness.

"Is the consciousness produced because of the tongue, such that the tongue is its realm, or is it produced because of the flavors, such that the flavors are its realm?

Commentary:

The Buddha calls out to Ananda, **"Moreover, Ananda, as you understand it –** in the past, when I explained the Buddhadharma of the Small Vehicle to you, the Provisional Vehicle, in order to teach and transform all living beings, I spoke about the realms of the tongue and flavors among the eighteen realms. **The tongue and flavors create the conditions that produce the tongue-consciousness."** Together they create the conditions. By having a tongue, one recognizes tastes. When there are flavors, the tongue is able to know of them. They work together to produce the tongue consciousness. The organ of the tongue and the defiling objects of flavors stand paired with one another, and in their midst is produced a mind which makes distinctions; this is called the tongue consciousness. But, ultimately, where are the bounds of the tongue consciousness? **"Is the consciousness produced because of the tongue, such that the tongue is its realm?"** Is the consciousness born from the tongue, and does the tongue consciousness use the tongue to form its boundaries? "**Or is it produced because of the**

flavors, such that the flavors are its realm? Perhaps it is produced because of the defiling object of flavors and takes the defiling objects of flavors as its boundaries. Tell me, Ananda."

Q3 Discusses them separately and together and refutes all possibilities.
R1 Refutes that it is produced from the tongue.

Sutra:

"Suppose, Ananda, that it were produced because of the tongue. Then all the sugar cane, black plums, huang lien, salt, wild ginger, ginger, and cassia in the world would be entirely without flavor. Also, when you taste your own tongue, is it sweet or bitter?

Commentary:

"Suppose, Ananda, that it were produced because of the tongue." If the tongue consciousness were produced because of the tongue organ, "then all the sugar cane, black plums" – these are the sour plums mentioned earlier, when the Buddha said that just thinking of them caused the mouth to water. "*Huang lien*" (*Coptis Japonica*) is an extremely bitter medicine. "Salt" simply refers to the kind of salt we eat. "Wild Ginger" (*Asarum Sieboldi*) is another kind of medicine. "Ginger and cassia" are also herbal medicines. "All such substances in the world **would be entirely without flavor.**" If the tongue consciousness were produced because of the tongue, the flavors of these medicines would not exist.

"Also, when you taste your own tongue, is it sweet or bitter? Further, you say that the tongue consciousness comes from the tongue. Try it, then. What does your tongue taste like?" the Buddha asks Ananda.

Sutra:

"Suppose the nature of your tongue were bitter. Then, what would it be that tasted the tongue? Since the tongue cannot taste itself, who would have the sense of taste?

"If the nature of the tongue were not bitter, there would be no flavor engendered by it. Thus, how could a realm be established?

Commentary:

"Suppose the nature of your tongue were bitter. Ananda, if upon tasting your tongue you found it was bitter, **what would it be that tasted the tongue? Since the tongue cannot taste itself, who would have the sense of taste?"** Who would it be who was aware of and knew of the tongue consciousness?

"If the nature of the tongue were not bitter, there would be no flavor engendered by it." If the tongue had no flavor, then the tongue itself would not produce flavor. **Thus, how could a realm be established?"** Then where would the realm of the tongue consciousness be established? Where would it be?

R2 Refutes that it is produced from flavors.

Sutra:

"If it were produced because of flavor, the consciousness itself would be a flavor. The case would be the same as with the tongue organ being unable to taste itself. How could the consciousness know whether it had flavor or not?

Commentary:

"If it were produced because of flavor, the consciousness itself would be a flavor. If you say that flavor produces the consciousness, then consciousness also becomes a flavor. **Then the case would be the same as with the tongue organ being unable to taste itself.** You say the consciousness is itself a flavor. But, a flavor cannot know its own flavor, just as the tongue cannot taste itself. Bitterness, for example, could not taste itself and say, 'Oh, I am bitter.' Flavor basically has no knowing awareness. **How could the consciousness know whether it had flavor or not?"** Since flavor is without a knowing awareness, how could it have within it a consciousness which makes distinctions? How could it tell whether it was sweet or bitter? Flavor cannot taste itself.

Sutra:

"Moreover, flavors do not all come from one thing. Since flavors are produced from many things, the consciousness would have many substances.

Commentary:

"You say the consciousness is produced from the flavor, but there is not just one kind of flavor. There are many kinds. **Moreover, flavors do not all come from one thing.**" Sour, sweet, bitter, hot, salty – there are many kinds of flavors produced from many things. For instance, hot peppers are hot, black plums are sour, sugar cane is sweet, *huang lien* is bitter, salt is, of course, salty. "**Since flavors are produced from many things, the consciousness would have many substances.** But, the substance of consciousness does not have a variety of natures."

This passage points to the fact that consciousness is unchanging. It "accords with conditions and does not change; it is unchanging, and yet it accords with conditions." Thus, although there are many kinds of things which produce many kinds of flavors, the tongue consciousness does not imitate flavors in having so many substances. Shakyamuni Buddha is explaining this way intentionally in order to cause Ananda to understand that the consciousness is produced from the Treasury of the Thus Come One. It is not a particular flavor or the tongue that produces the consciousness.

Sutra:

"Suppose that the consciousness were of a single substance and that the substance was definitely produced from flavor. Then, when salt, bland, sweet, and pungent were combined, their various differences would change into a single flavor and there would be no distinctions among them.

Commentary:

"Suppose that the consciousness were of a single substance and that the substance was definitely produced from flavor." It

was stated above that one substance cannot be produced from many flavors; however, if we say that the consciousness is, nevertheless, one substance and that it is produced from the various flavors, then we have to say that the various flavors combine and change into a single flavor. **“Then, when salt, bland, sweet, and pungent were combined, their various differences would change into a single flavor.”** In that case, **“there would be no distinctions among them.”** There wouldn’t be all those flavors of sour, sweet, bitter, hot, and salty. “Pungent” here means hot. “Bland” means tasteless. They would be a single flavor.

Sutra:

“If there were no distinctions, it could not be called consciousness. So, how could it further be called the realm of tongue, flavor, and consciousness?

Commentary:

A lot of flavors are combined into one substance, and each loses its original flavor. For instance, if you add something sweet to hot things, they are no longer as hot, and the sweet is no longer as sweet. Their flavors change. If you combine sour, sweet, bitter, hot, and salty together you alter their original flavor. So, when the original flavors disappear they change into a single flavor. And, within this flavor nothing can be distinguished. **“If there were no distinctions” –** if there were no flavor to be distinguished – **“it could not be called consciousness.”** The consciousness makes distinctions, but here it does not make distinctions, it cannot be called consciousness. It can’t even be called consciousness, “**so, how could it further be called the realm of tongue, flavor, and consciousness?** It could not.”

R3 Refutes that it is produced from emptiness.

Sutra:

“Nor can it be that empty space produces your conscious awareness.

Commentary:

Your tongue consciousness cannot be produced from empty space. It can't be that emptiness produces your consciousness, your mind.

R4 Refutes that it arises from a combination of these.

Sutra:

"The tongue and flavors could not combine without each losing its basic nature. How could a realm be produced?

Commentary:

"The tongue and flavors could not combine without each losing its basic nature." If the tongue and flavors combine, neither would retain a nature. **"How could a realm be produced?** How can you give it a name and set it up as the tongue consciousness realm? You cannot."

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that, as to the tongue and flavors being the conditions that produce the realm of tongue consciousness, none of the three places exists. Thus, the tongue, flavors, and the realm of the tongue these three do not have their origin in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.

Commentary:

"Therefore – because of this, Ananda, **you should know that, as to the tongue and flavors being the conditions –** as to the tongue and flavors together producing the causes and conditions **that produce the realm of tongue consciousness, none of the three places exists.** You say that the consciousness is produced from the tongue organ, but it isn't. You say it is produced from the defiled objects of flavors, but it isn't. Nor can it be produced from the tongue consciousness itself. Thus, none of those three places has a substantial nature. **Thus,** if it is explained this way you can

realize that **the tongue, flavors, and the realm of the tongue –** the consciousness realm of the tongue – **these three – do not have their origin in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously."** They are not produced from causes and conditions, nor are they produced spontaneously. For them to be produced from causes and conditions would be for them to fall into the realm of existence. For them to be produced spontaneously would be for them to fall into the realm of emptiness. Emptiness and existence are two kinds, and they are not the completed meaning of the Middle Way. They are the causes and conditions taught by the Provisional Teaching, and the spontaneity taught by adherents of sects outside the Way. Where does the tongue consciousness realm ultimately come from? It, too, is a manifestation of the wonderful nature of true suchness of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

P5 The realm of body consciousness, objects of touch.
Q1 Sets the scene to discuss the organ, object, and consciousness.
Q2 Asks which gives rise to which.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Ananda, as you understand it, the body and objects of touch create the conditions that produce the body consciousness.

"Is this consciousness produced because of the body, such that the body is its realm, or is it produced because of objects of touch, such that objects of touch are its realm?

Commentary:

"Moreover, Ananda, as you understand it – in the doctrines of the Small Vehicle, the Provisional Teaching, which you have heard, **the body and objects of touch create the conditions that produce the body consciousness."** The organ of the body and the defiling objects of touch combine to produce conditions, and the existence of these conditions produces the body consciousness. The distinction of the body consciousness is produced.

“Is this consciousness produced because of the body? Does this consciousness exist because the body produced it, **such that the body is its realm?** Is the body the realm of the body consciousness? **Or is it produced because of objects of touch?** Or is it the defiling objects of touch that produce the consciousness which makes distinctions?”

Q3 Discusses them separately and together and refutes all possibilities.
R1 Refutes that it is produced from the body.

Sutra:

“Suppose, Ananda, that it were produced because of the body. When there was no awareness of the two conditions of contact with and separation from objects of touch, what would the body be conscious of?

Commentary:

“Suppose, Ananda, that it were produced because of the body. Suppose you say the consciousness is produced because of the body. **When there was no awareness of the two conditions of contact with and separation from objects of touch, what would the body be conscious of?** What about the case when there is neither unity nor separation for the body to be conscious of? What is the body aware of then? What consciousness would it have? Thus, how can the consciousness be produced only from the body?”

R2 Refutes that it is produced from objects of touch.

Sutra:

“Suppose it were produced because of objects of touch. Then you would not need your body. Without a body, what could perceive contact with and separation from objects of touch?

Commentary:

“Suppose it were produced because of objects of touch. If you say the objects of touch produce the consciousness, then it is not produced from your body. **Then you would not need your**

body. It would have nothing to do with your body. **Without a body, what could perceive contact with and separation from objects of touch?"** Is there anyone in this world who can say, "It is not I who experience objects of touch with my body, but another body which perceives the sensation of unity and separation." This doesn't happen either.

Why do I say that?

R3 Refutes that it is produced from a combination of these.

Sutra:

"Ananda, things do not perceive objects of touch. It is the body that perceives objects of touch.

Commentary:

"Ananda, you should know that **things do not perceive objects of touch. It is the body that perceives objects of touch.** Things do not have the power of awareness. They do not have a nature that makes distinctions. You say the consciousness that makes distinctions comes from things; this is a mistake. If you can perceive the existence of objects of touch, the defiling objects of touch, it is your body that perceives them. If it were not for your body, how would you know there had been objects of touch? It is because objects of touch come into contact with your body that there is that awareness. Ultimately, however, where is the realm of the consciousness that is produced in the midst of the objects of touch and your body? Is it in the body, or is it in objects of touch?"

Sutra:

"What the body knows is objects of touch, and what is aware of objects of touch is the body. What is objects of touch is not the body, and what is the body is not objects of touch.

Commentary:

"What the body knows is objects of touch. The consciousness which makes distinctions is aware of objects of touch by means of your body. The body's awareness comes about because of objects

of touch. Thus, contact is what is known, and the body is what experiences contact. So your consciousness knows of the body because of contact. The awareness arises from the contact."

"And what is aware of objects of touch is the body." "Awareness" here refers to consciousness. "With the consciousness you are aware of a sensation of touch, and that sensation of touch comes from the body."

"However, what is objects of touch is not the body." To speak of the body by itself, the defiling object of touch is simply the defiling object of touch – it is not the body. **"And what is the body is not objects of touch.** And your body is not the defiling objects of touch. The two work together, but they are not the same. So, if we try to determine exactly where, between your body and the defiling objects of touch, the consciousness is, if you say that the consciousness definitely lies on one side or the other – either on the side of the body or on the side of the objects of touch – you won't be able to find it. If you cannot find it between the body and the objects of touch, then you fail to locate the actual place of the consciousness. So where will you go to find the consciousness?"

Sutra:

"The two characteristics of body and objects of touch are basically without a location. If it united with the body, it would be the body's own substance and nature. If it were apart from the body, it would have the same appearance as empty space.

Commentary:

"The two characteristics of body and objects of touch have no fixed location. You try to find out where the characteristic of the body and the characteristic of objects of touch ultimately are, but they **are basically without a location. If it united with the body, it would be the body's own substance and nature.** If the consciousness unites with the body, if you want to say that the consciousness is produced from the body, then it would be the body's own substance and nature. **If it were apart from the body, it would have the same appearance as empty space.** Suppose you

say the consciousness is apart from the body. But, what is apart from the body is empty space, and you cannot find the appearance of a consciousness. So, the consciousness does not have the characteristic of a substance."

Sutra:

"Since the inside and the outside don't stand up, how can one set up a middle? The middle cannot be set up, either. The inside and the outside are by nature empty. From what realm, then, is your consciousness born?

Commentary:

"Since the inside and the outside don't stand up, how can one set up a middle? You say the consciousness is inside, but it is not; you say it is outside, but it is not; you say it is in the defiling objects of touch, but it is not; you say it is in the organ of the body, but it is not. Since, then, neither the inside nor the outside exist, how can there be an appearance of a middle? **The middle cannot be set up, either.** You cannot distinguish where the middle is. **The inside and the outside are by nature empty.** There isn't any middle, and there isn't any inside or outside. They are by nature empty. **From what realm, then, is your consciousness born?** There isn't any inside, there isn't any outside, and there isn't any middle. So, ultimately, what does the consciousness make use of to form its realm? Where can it set up a realm?"

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that, as to the body and objects of touch being the conditions that produce the realm of body consciousness, none of the three places exists. Thus, the body, objects of touch, and the realm of the body these three do not have their origin in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.

Commentary:

The various principles explained above demonstrate that the realm of the body consciousness cannot be found. It has no realm. **"Therefore, you should know –** because of this, Ananda, you ought to know – **that, as to the body and contact being the conditions –** the body and the defiling objects of touch being the mutual conditions – t**hat produce the realm of body consciousness" –** earlier, in the teaching of the Provisional Vehicle, the principle of the production of the body consciousness realm was discussed – **"none of the three places exists. Thus, the body, objects of touch –** the organ of the body and the defiling objects of touch – **and the realm of the body –** the realm of body consciousness – **these three – do not have their origin in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.** They are a manifestation from within the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. You cannot find a fixed location for them. So, you should not compare the teaching methods of the Provisional Vehicle to the true and actual principles of the Actual Vehicle.

What was spoken before was expedient dharma. The dharma which is now spoken is the number one truth, it is the teaching method of the complete meaning of the Middle Way, which is totally different from the former Dharma door. The five skandhas, the six entrances, the twelve places, and the eighteen realms – all these various dharmas do not arise from causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously.

Earlier, the Buddha used the dharma of causes and conditions to smash theories of spontaneity propounded by sects outside the Way. That is why Ananda became attached to the dharma of causes and conditions and couldn't reject it. He couldn't give up the idea. He thought that the dharma which had been spoken previously could not be altered, could not be changed. Why is the Buddha now negating the principles which he previously explained? For the Buddha himself not to recognize the dharma which he himself had spoken before is to contradict himself, isn't it? He contradicts what

he himself said. It is at this point that Ananda gives rise to all kinds of doubts and keeps coming up with questions. So now the Buddha tells Ananda that he explained the dharma of causes and conditions earlier in order to counteract the outside the Way-sects' explanation of the dharma of spontaneity; it was certainly not ultimate. It was certainly not the essential Dharma door. Now the complete meaning of the Middle Way, the number one truth, the genuine Dharma-door is being explained, and the former methods cannot be used; you cannot continue to hold on to them. Ananda had not understood that, so he kept asking questions.

P6 The realm of mind, dharmas, and consciousness.
Q1 Sets the scene to discuss the organ, and object, and consciousness.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Ananda, as you understand it, the mind and dharmas create the conditions that produce the mind consciousness.

Q2 Asks which gives rise to which.

Sutra:

"Is this consciousness produced because of the mind, such that the mind is its realm, or is it produced because of dharmas, such that dharmas are its realm?

Q3 Discusses them separately and together and refutes all possibilities.
R1 Refutes that it is produced from the mind.

Sutra:

"Suppose, Ananda, that it were produced because of the mind. In your mind there certainly must be thoughts; these give expression to your mind. If there are no dharmas before you, the mind does not give rise to anything. Apart from conditions, it has no shape; thus, what use would the consciousness be?

Commentary:

"Moreover, Ananda, as you understand it – you heard this dharma in the past **– the mind and dharmas create the conditions**

– the organ of your mind and the dusts of dharmas together produce conditions **– that produce the mind consciousness.”** In the midst of these conditions, the mind consciousness arises. **“Is this consciousness produced because of the mind?”** Is it because of the mind that the mind consciousness arises, **“such that the mind is its realm, or is it produced because of dharmas –** or is it dharmas that produce the mind consciousness – **such that dharmas are its realm?**

“Suppose, Ananda, that it were produced because of the mind. Suppose you say that the mind consciousness is produced because of the mind. **In your mind there certainly must be thoughts.** In the organ of your mind you certainly will have some kind of thinking. And, it is these thoughts of yours which **give expression to your mind.** They bring forth the mind consciousness of the organ of the mind. **If there are no dharmas before you –** ‘dharmas before you’ means your present thoughts. If you are not thinking, if you haven’t any thoughts, **the mind does not give rise to anything.** In the organ of your mind there are no defiling objects of dharmas – no thoughts. No dharma can arise. **Apart from conditions, it has no shape.”** Apart from these causes and conditions – the mind and the defiling objects – the mind consciousness has no shape. There basically is no form or shape, because the mind is conditioned by dharmas. So then, what is its appearance? It has none. Apart from the mind that seizes on conditions, there is no form or shape. **“Thus, what use would the consciousness be?”** When there is no form or shape, where is the consciousness? What ability does it have to create its own function as a consciousness?

Sutra:

“Moreover, is your conscious awareness the same as your mind organ, with its capacity to understand and make distinctions, or is it different? If it were the same as the mind, it would be the mind; how could it be something else that arises? If it were different from the mind, it should thereby be devoid of

consciousness. If there were no consciousness, how would it arise from the mind? If there were consciousness, how would it differ from the mind? Since it is by nature neither the same nor different, how can a realm be established?

Commentary:

The Buddha said to Ananda, **“Moreover, is your conscious awareness the same as your mind organ, with its capacity to understand and make distinctions, or is it different?** That is, are the natures of your conscious mind and the organ of your mind the same? **If it were the same as the mind, it would be the mind.** You may say that the conscious mind is the same as the organ of the mind, but what is the same as the organ of the mind is the organ of the mind and cannot be called the consciousness. **How could it be something else that arises?** If the mind consciousness is the organ of the mind, how can you say the consciousness arises within the organ of the mind? **If it were different from the mind, it should thereby be devoid of consciousness.** ‘Different from the mind’ means the same as defiling objects of dharmas. Defiling objects of dharmas have no ability to make distinctions. The organ of your mind has the ability to make distinctions. The consciousness also has the ability to make distinctions. If it is different from the mind, if it were produced from the mind, it would not be the same as the mind. If it were not the same, it would have no consciousness.

“If there were consciousness – if you say there is consciousness **– how would it differ from the mind?** How can your mind know your own mind? **Since it is by nature neither the same nor different –** neither nature is possible **– how can a realm be established?** You say that your consciousness and the organ of the mind are the same, but that doesn’t work; you say they are different, but that doesn’t work, either. Neither case is possible. And, since they are impossible, how can you set up a realm in the midst of them and say there is a mind consciousness realm?”

R2 Refutes that it is produced from dharmas.

Sutra:

"Suppose it were produced because of dharmas. None of the dharmas of the world exists apart from the five defiling objects. Consider the dharmas of form, the dharmas of sound, the dharmas of smell, the dharmas of taste, and the dharmas of touch: each has a clearly distinguishable appearance and is matched with one of the five organs. They are not what the mind takes in.

Commentary:

"Suppose it were produced because of dharmas. You may want to say that the mind consciousness is produced because of dharmas, since the mind is conditioned by dharmas. But, **none of the dharmas of the world exists apart from the five defiling objects."** "The world" here refers to the sentient world and the material world. None of the dharmas in these worlds is apart from the realms of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and objects of touch. **"Consider the dharmas of form, the dharmas of sound, the dharmas of smell, the dharmas of taste, and the dharmas of touch.** You should take a look at them. **Each has a clearly distinguishable appearance" –** forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and objects of touch all have their own appearances which are very clear **– "and is matched with one of the five organs."** They are opposite the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body. The five organs are matched with the five defiling objects. "**They are not what the mind takes in.** They do not belong to the organ of your mind."

Sutra:

"Suppose your consciousness were indeed produced through a reliance on dharmas. Take a close look at them now: what does each and every dharma look like?

Commentary:

"Your mind consciousness has no connection with the first five defiling objects. Now, **suppose your consciousness were indeed**

produced through a reliance on dharmas. Perhaps you believe that the defiling objects of dharmas produce the mind consciousness. **As you now take a close look at them now –** you should contemplate then carefully and in detail; take a good, close look. **What does each and every dharma look like?**" What are the dharmas which can produce the mind consciousness like? Are they apparent, or are they non apparent?

Sutra:

"Underlying the characteristics of form and emptiness, movement and stillness, penetration and obstruction, unity and separation, and production and extinction there is nothing at all.

Commentary:

"If you depart from the defiling objects of **form** and **emptiness, movement and stillness, penetration and obstruction, unity and separation, and production and extinction –** these various dharmas **– there is nothing at all.** 'Underlying' means to have no connection with the dharmas just mentioned; if you depart from these characteristics and break all connections with them, 'there is nothing at all.' No matter how you look at it, it is to be feared you won't come up with anything. The defiling objects of dharmas are invisible. So, you may look for their appearance, but you cannot find it."

Sutra:

"When there is production, then form, emptiness, and all dharmas are produced. When there is extinction, then form, emptiness, and all dharmas are extinguished. Since what is causal does not exist, if those causes produce the consciousness, what appearance does the consciousness assume? If there is nothing discernable about the consciousness, how can a realm be established for it?

Commentary:

"When there is production, then form, emptiness, and all dharmas are produced." If the dharmas of form, emptiness, and the like mentioned above are produced, they are produced simultaneously. **"When there is extinction, then form, emptiness, and all dharmas are extinguished."** When there is extinction, forms, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas are all extinguished at the same time. **"Since what is causal does not exist, if those causes produce the consciousness, what appearance does the consciousness assume?** 'What is causal' refers to the defiling objects of dharmas. They are gone; you cannot find them. Since the defiling objects of dharmas are gone, how can there be consciousness? Basically, it does not exist. Basically, the defiling objects of dharmas which are produced haven't any substance or nature of their own. Thus, where will you go to find a consciousness? The consciousness, basically, cannot exist, either. Suppose the consciousness did exist; what would its appearance be? What is the consciousness like? Does it have an appearance, or not? **If there is nothing discernable about the consciousness –** since it has no appearance that can be found – **how can a realm be established for it?** The consciousness doesn't even have any characteristics; how can you set up a realm for it? Therefore, the realm of the mind consciousness does not exist, either."

Q4 Concludes by returning the false to the true.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that, as to the mind and dharmas being the conditions that produce the realm of the mind consciousness, none of the three places exists. Thus, the mind, dharmas, and the realm of the mind these three – do not have their origin in causes and conditions, nor do their natures arise spontaneously."

Commentary:

“Therefore, you should know – because of this, Ananda, you should understand this principle – **that, as to the mind and dharmas being the conditions that produce the realm of the mind-consciousness, none of the three places exists.** You, basically, cannot find a mind realm, and you cannot find a mind consciousness realm, nor can you find a realm of dharmas. These three places, among the eighteen realms, are all non existent. **Thus, the mind, dharmas, and the realm of the mind –** the organ of the mind, the defiling objects of dharmas, and the mind consciousness realm – **these three – do not have their origin in causes and conditions –** basically, they do not belong to what is included among dharmas of cause and condition – **nor do their natures arise spontaneously.** Nor do they belong to what is said to be spontaneous by adherents to sects outside the Way.”

What are they then? The mind, the defiling object of dharmas, and the mind consciousness produced in their midst are all one part of the nature of wonderful true suchness of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

Chapter 6

The Seven Elements Are All-Pervasive

L3 Finally he shows that the nature of the seven elements is all pervasive.
M1 Ananda, in turn, has doubts about the non existence of the other two teachings.

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, the Thus Come One has often spoken of the mixture and union of causes and conditions, saying that the transformations of everything in the world are created from the mixing and uniting of the four elements.

Commentary:

Ananda again said to the Buddha, "World Honored One , the Thus Come One has often spoken – Thus Come One, you're always talking about the dharma **of the mixture and union and the dharma of causes and conditions.** You say that **the transformations of everything in the world –** 'the world' again refers to the sentient world and the material world – all kinds of different circumstances and change **are created from the mixing and uniting of the four elements."**

What are the four elements? They are earth, water, fire, and wind. People's bodies are a combination of the four elements. How is it that the body is composed of the four elements? The places in

our bodies which are hard and solid belong to the element earth. The warmth in our bodies belongs to the element fire. Saliva, tears, and mucus belong to the element water. Our breath belongs to the element wind. While we are alive, our body is under our control, but after we die the four elements disperse. The warmth in our bodies returns to the element fire. The moisture returns to the element water. The solids return to the element earth. Our breath returns to the element wind.

People who do not understand about the body want to help it in all that it does. What they don't know is that in this way the true nature becomes a slave to a false form. Every day one is upside down, toiling and desperately rushing back and forth. Ultimately, what's it all for? Ultimately, what meaning is there in it? You ask people this and they are like Ananda – mouth agape and speechless. They can't come up with a reason. Because people do not understand about the body, they spend all their energy on a dead thing. They don't apply their effort to a living thing. What "dead thing" is being referred to? Although we are still alive, our bodies may be considered already dead. What living thing is being referred to? Although we are not aware that it is alive, our spirit is young and full of life – it is our originally existent Buddha nature.

But people don't know that they should investigate their own Buddha nature, and they apply effort to their bodies instead. From morning till night they help the body get good things to eat. They are controlled by their body. They help the body get fine clothes to wear. Just what is this body, anyway? I will tell all of you, and whether you admit it or not is your business. If someone likes to drink wine, then the body becomes a wine sack. If someone likes to eat fine food, then the body becomes a bread basket. If someone likes to wear fine clothing, the body becomes a clothes horse. It isn't anything to grasp onto. Don't look upon it as so important. But, you can't put it down; you can't see through it. Though you can't see through it, and though you can't put it down, when you die and the four elements disperse, you will have to see through what

you couldn't see through. Time waits for no one. You can never say to time, "Wait a minute for me. Wait a bit." It will not wait.

Sutra:

"Why does the Thus Come One reject causes and conditions and spontaneity as well? I do not know how to understand your meaning now.

Commentary:

"Buddha, you've said that everything in the world comes forth from and is created from the causes and conditions of the mixing and uniting of the four elements. Why is it now that you say that causes and conditions and spontaneity are all incorrect?" Ananda's attachments are quite strong. In the past he has heard the Buddha explain the principle of causes and conditions. Basically that was a provisional teaching, a provisional, clever expedient; it was not true and actual. Now the Buddha explains the true and actual Dharma door, and Ananda does not believe it. He firmly believes in the expedient Dharma door that the Buddha explained in the past, and in turn he doubts the true and actual Dharma door. So he asks, **"Why does the Thus Come One reject causes and conditions and spontaneity as well?** Buddha, you have criticized causes and conditions and spontaneity and pronounced them incorrect. Isn't that contradicting yourself? You are destroying the very principles which you yourself established. You are refuting your own thesis. **I do not know how to understand your meaning now.** I don't see what principle this is now. What Dharma door does it belong to? I don't understand."

Sutra:

"Please be so compassionate as to instruct us living beings in the final meaning of the Middle Way in the dharmas which are not idle theories."

Commentary:

"Please be so compassionate – I now only hope that the Buddha will sympathize with us, bring forth compassion towards

us living beings – **as to instruct us living beings in the final meaning of the Middle Way,** in the Dharma door which does not joke around. We want an explanation of the truth, of **the dharmas which are not idle theories."**

What is meant by "idle theories?" All the Dharma doors of the provisional vehicle and of the teachings of the sects outside the Way are called "idle theories." The present explanation of the real vehicle, the explanation of the true and actual Dharma door, is called the final meaning of the Middle Way. The Middle Way does not fall into emptiness, nor does it fall into existence. The spontaneity taught by sects outside the Way falls into emptiness. Causes and conditions belong to existence. Now it is neither emptiness nor existence that is being explained; it is the final meaning of the Middle Way, a Dharma door which is not an idle theory.

M2 The Buddha proceeds to explain thoroughly.
N1 He scolds him for his confusion and promises to explain.

Sutra:

The World Honored One then told Ananda, "You have renounced the Small Vehicle dharmas of the Sound Hearers and those enlightened to conditions and have resolved to diligently seek unsurpassed Bodhi. Because of that, I will now explain the foremost truth to you.

Commentary:

The World Honored One, the Buddha, **then told Ananda, "You have renounced the Small Vehicle dharmas of the Sound Hearers and those enlightened to conditions.** You have already decided to renounce the Dharma doors of the Two Vehicles of the Sound Hearers and those enlightened to conditions, the dharmas of the Agamas, **and have resolved to diligently seek unsurpassed Bodhi.** You now diligently seek the unsurpassed Way to enlightenment, the Dharma of the Bodhisattva. **Because of that, I will now explain the foremost truth to you.** I will explain the Dharma door

of the Real Appearance to you." The foremost truth is the Real Appearance.

There are three kinds of Real Appearances:

the Real Appearance
which is without an appearance;
the Real Appearance
which is not without an appearance;
the Real Appearance
which is without an appearance
and yet not without an appearance.

Although they are said to be three kinds, they are one kind: the Real Appearance. The Real Appearance has no appearance, and yet there is nothing which does not appear. Within this is the principle of true emptiness and wonderful existence.

If one explains it to the ultimate point, there basically isn't anything at all. Yet, within that nothing at all there is everything. So, nothing at all is true emptiness, and the existence of everything is wonderful existence.

The principle now being explained will lead to an explanation of the seven elements – earth, water, fire, wind, emptiness, perception, and consciousness – as pervading the Dharma Realm. The five skandhas, the six entrances, the twelve places, the eighteen realms discussed before explained the wonderful true suchness nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, but it was not said that they pervaded the Dharma Realm.

Sutra:

"Why do you still bind yourself up in the idle theories and false thoughts current among people of the world?

Commentary:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "You have just decided to renounce the Dharma doors of the Small Vehicle, to bring forth the resolve for the Great Vehicle – the Bodhisattva Vehicle – and to

seek unsurpassed Bodhi. Therefore, I will instruct you in the principle of the Real Appearance. Why – the tone here is one of accusation – **do you still bind yourself up in the idle theories**, the worldly explanation of doctrines which are not true, **and false thoughts current among people of the world?** It's just as if you took a rope and tied yourself up with it. You cannot get free. You cannot be liberated. Why do you want to be like that? What I am explaining to you is the foremost truth. Why is it you still don't understand?"

Sutra:

"Although you are very learned, you are like someone who can discuss medicines but cannot distinguish a real medicine when it is placed before you. The Thus Come One says that you are truly pitiful.

Commentary:

"Although you are very learned – Ananda, although you have a strong memory and have memorized many sutras – **you are like someone who can discuss medicines.** You are learned, but what is it like? You are like someone who can recite the medicine texts and can say which medicines cure which illnesses and which medicines have what effect – like someone who can recite the Yao Hsing Fu. You, too, have memorized well, but you're like someone who **cannot distinguish a real medicine when it is placed before you.** When you see the true medicine you don't recognize it. You cannot tell if it's the true one. Why can't you make these distinctions? Because all you do is advocate intellectual talk Ch'an. You can talk about it very well, but when you investigate the truth, you don't understand. **The Thus Come One says that you are truly pitiful."**

Sutra:

"Listen attentively now as I explain this point in detail for you and also for those of the future who cultivate the Great Vehicle, so that you all can penetrate to the real appearance."

Ananda was silent and awaited the Buddha's holy instruction.

Commentary:

"Listen attentively now. Don't be confused any longer. You should pay attention, be alert, and listen **as I explain this point in detail for you.** For your sake, Ananda, I will now distinguish and explain it. I will divide and categorize and explain it for you in great detail, **and also for those of the future."**

You and I here are included among "those of the future." It is now the future that the Buddha then referred to. We now form the assemblies of what was the future then.

"Who cultivate the Great Vehicle" – we are now cultivating the Great Vehicle, not the Small Vehicle, in order to **"penetrate to the real appearance,"** to understand the principle of the Real Appearance. As was explained before, Real Appearance is no appearance. With no appearance, what still exists? Everything exists. "No Appearance" means that it cannot have any empty, false appearance. The Real Appearance is totally real.

Ananda was silent. Ananda heard that the Buddha was going to explain the principle of the Real Appearance, but he didn't know what was meant. The Real Appearance was a new term when the Buddha brought it up at that point, and Ananda didn't understand what it meant. So, he and **awaited the Buddha's holy instruction.** On tip toe, with his eyes glued on the Buddha, he waited for him to speak the Dharma.

N2 He gives a general analogy about the nature and its characteristics.

Sutra:

"Ananda, according to what you said, the mixing and uniting of the four elements create the myriad transformations of everything in the world.

Commentary:

"Ananda, according to what you said, as you understand it, **the mixing and uniting of the four elements –** earth, water, fire, and wind – combine to **create the myriad transformations of everything in the world."**

Sutra:

"Ananda, if the nature of those elements does not mix and unite in substance, then they cannot combine with other elements, just as empty space cannot combine with forms.

Commentary:

"Ananda, if the nature of those elements – if the nature of the substance of the elements **does not mix and unite in substance –** basically the nature of their substance is not one which unites – **then they cannot combine with other elements.** The elements cannot intermingle and merge with one another, **just as empty space cannot combine with forms."** It is the same as with empty space, which cannot unite with things that have form. If there is a union, then it is not empty space. This contradiction is also evident in the nature of the elements.

Sutra:

"Assuming that they do mix and unite, they are then only in a process of transformation in which they depend on one another for existence from beginning to end. In the course of transformation they are produced and extinguished being born and then dying, dying and then being born, in birth after birth, in death after death, the way a torch spun in a circle forms an unbroken wheel of flame.

Commentary:

"Assuming that they do mix and unite – suppose you want to say that the four elements mix and unite – **they are then only in a process of transformation in which they depend on one another for existence."** They mix with everything and are subject to change. **"From beginning to end,** they change and come into

being, and **in the course of transformation they are produced and extinguished,** extinguished then produced, again and again unendingly, **being born and then dying, dying and then being born, in birth after birth, in death after death, the way a torch spun in a circle forms an unbroken wheel of flame."** It never stops. Is that the way it is?

Sutra:

"Ananda, the process is like water becoming ice and ice becoming water again.

Commentary:

"Ananda, you should know that the true suchness of the self nature accords with conditions yet does not change; it does not change, yet accords with conditions. How is that explained? The true suchness of the self nature, which is also the Treasury of the Thus Come One, and also the Real Appearance, and also our true mind, **is like water becoming ice and ice becoming water again."**

It is like water which becomes ice: that is, it accords with conditions, just as water can turn into ice. But the ice can also melt and become water again. I have often explained this principle to you. People's Buddhanature is the true nature. Bodhi enlightenment is water; affliction is ice. Your Bodhi is like water, useful to everyone; it cannot harm people. Everyone needs water.

You say, "Dharma Master, I don't agree with the principle you are explaining. Why? Because a lot of water can drown people."

You are really intelligent. You know that too much water can drown people. But when there isn't any water, can't people die of thirst? So water is necessary for everyone. Of course too much of it can harm people. It's that way with anything: too much is harmful. If you don't eat, you get hungry, but if you eat day after day without cease, see if your stomach has a place to put it all. Having too much is the same as not having enough. Eating too much is the same as being fiercely hungry.

So, water can turn into ice. I often say that if you were to pour a bowl of water over someone's head, he wouldn't feel any pain. But, if you hit someone over the head with a piece of ice, you certainly could kill him. A piece of ice can kill someone. A bowlful of water cannot kill anyone. Ice and water are actually the same thing, but in the form of ice it can kill people, and in the form of water it cannot. Because of this, affliction is compared to ice; Bodhi is compared to water. The Buddha's Sutras say, "Affliction is just Bodhi." The ice is just water. There is no ice in addition to the water, and no water in addition to the ice. The ice is in the water, and the water is in the ice. Thus, the Sutra says, "Ice becoming water again." But in order to turn your ice into water, you have to develop a certain amount of skill. What is required? You have to use yang light to illumine it. And then the ice can turn into water. This refers to our daily practice of sitting in meditation and investigating Ch'an. That illumines our afflictions so that they turn into water.

There is another bit of important principle I would like to explain to you now. This Dharma assembly we have convened is a subtle and wonderful one. In what way? I explain the Sutras in Chinese, and my Chinese is translated into English. So we explain the Buddha dharma in two languages. But when you are listening to the Sutra, regardless of whether you understand the language you are hearing it in, you should pay close attention.

First, everyone who listens to Sutras should thank Shakyamuni Buddha. Why? Because several thousand years ago Shakyamuni Buddha spoke this wonderful Dharma, preparing a bright lamp in the dark night, for the sake of us living beings in suffering and difficulty. He spoke the Dharma in order to cause us to be able to leave suffering and obtain bliss, to be apart from the afflictions of this world, and to come to understand the Way and bring forth bliss. He spoke the Dharma to cause us people with a lot of afflictions to be free of afflictions and to turn our ice into water, so that we can return to the source to go back to our origin. And so we should be thankful to Shakyamuni Buddha.

Second, we should thank the Venerable Ananda. Why? Because if the Venerable Ananda had pretended to be intelligent back then and had said, “Buddha, you don’t have to explain it. I understand. Whatever you are going to say, I already understand,” then the Buddha would not have spoken the Dharma; he wouldn’t have spoken the *Shurangama Sutra*. It is not easy for us to understand these principles, either. So we should thank the Venerable Ananda for having requested the Dharma beforehand on our behalf. He asked Shakyamuni Buddha to speak the Dharma for us.

I have something else to tell you that’s not very important. What is it? You should also thank the Dharma Master who is lecturing the Sutra. That’s me. Don’t neglect that! I say it’s not too important, but you shouldn’t look upon it too lightly, either. Basically, I am a Dharma Master who only half understands; I don’t explain the Sutras well. You say, “Oh, basically you can’t explain the Sutras well, yet you have come here to explain them to us who don’t understand the Buddhadharma. No wonder we don’t understand what we’re hearing. Basically you only half understand it yourself.”

But if you can understand half of the Buddhadharma that’s actually not bad. Why? Because the Buddhadharma is as deep as the sea. You may want to understand it completely, but that’s not at all an easy thing to do. I have studied the Buddhadharma for several decades – thirty or forty years – and yet I feel that I have not finished drinking a single drop of the great sea, because the Buddhadharma is so deep, so wonderful. That’s why I said I was a Dharma Master who only half understands. But you should say that you now understand completely, because you are like the green extracted from the blue, which is to say, there are top ranking students but no top ranking teachers. “My Master only half understands, but I, his disciple, have studied very well.” That’s the way you should talk.

Lastly, you should thank the translator of the Sutra. No matter who is doing the translating, you should pay close attention and

listen especially respectfully. You should be particularly attentive to every word and every sentence. Because I explain the Sutras in Chinese and most of you don't understand it, it is necessary for you to rely on the merit and virtue of the translation in order to hear the principles of the *Shurangama Sutra*. So you should be thankful to the translator; be very careful not to slight him or her.

Why do I say this today? Because in the summaries I had you write I saw that someone had written, "I listen to the Sutra here and I don't understand what the Dharma Master is explaining, and the translation isn't very good, so I'm not going to study here any more." The person who wrote this is basically a very intelligent person, but unfortunately she tends to outwit herself a bit. Why do I say that? Because she hasn't any patience. When you listen to Sutras, you should be patient whether you understand or not. When you remain in the Dharma assembly, you become permeated with the Dharma, just like the incense permeates the air, and eventually the light of your wisdom will shine forth. The people who have become enlightened while listening to Sutras are many indeed. You shouldn't look lightly upon listening to Sutras.

When I was in Hong Kong, there was an elder laywoman who couldn't listen to the Sutras at all. She was deaf. But every time there was a Sutra lecture she had to come and listen. She climbed over three hundred steps to the temple, although she was over seventy, and she came by herself. When the Sutra lecture was over, after nine o'clock at night, she would go back down all by herself; and when she got to the bottom she would have to take a bus. She was deaf, so how could she listen? It was strange, but after she had listened to the Sutras for a little over a month, she suddenly could hear. The deaf woman listened and was no longer deaf.

You hear this and think it quite profound, but actually it isn't the least bit unusual. It was simply that she was sincere. "Even if I can't hear, I'm going to listen," she told herself, and as a result she could hear. So, if a seventy year old woman could have that kind of response, then if each of you is sincere, regardless of whether you

understand or not, you will understand. Don't be afraid of not understanding right away.

All you have to do is to be sincere and a day will come when you do understand. If you aren't sincere, you may say, "I've been listening and listening and I don't understand, so I'm going to become one of the five thousand who retreat." If you do retreat, it's because your virtuous conduct is not sufficient.

In general, to be close to a Dharma assembly, you have to have virtue in the Way. People without Way virtue can't sit still in a Dharma assembly. They sit and then stand and then sit again, and they're nervous, and they want to go. Why? Because their karmic obstacle ghost is pulling at them. The ghost says, "You can't stay here. We're good friends. Let's go off together and create offenses."

So you should be attentive to these four points when listening to Sutras. In fact, you should not only thank the person who is doing the translating, you should be compatible with all your fellow students who are studying the Sutra with you. Everyone should be happy. This is an important principle in listening to Sutras, and you should not neglect it.

N3 He gives a detailed account about the nature and its characteristics.
O1 The element earth.
P1 He reveals its nature and divides it.

Sutra:

"Consider the nature of earth: its coarse particles make up the great earth. Its fine particles make up motes of dust, down to and including motes of dust bordering upon emptiness.

Commentary:

"Consider the nature of earth. Now I will explain the element earth to you, Ananda; you should be particularly attentive. Don't be like you were before when you neglected samadhi power and concentrated on being learned. Now I am explaining for you the basic doctrines of samadhi power.

Take a look at the nature of earth: **its coarse particles make up the great earth.”** “Coarse” means that for the most part, the earth consists of accumulations of dust bound together. **“Its fine particles make up motes of dust.** The smallest parts are motes of dust, **down to and including motes of dust bordering upon emptiness.”**

“Motes of dust bordering upon emptiness” are the smallest particles, invisible to the ordinary eye. They are neighbors of emptiness; they are more or less empty space, which isn’t anything at all. You say, “When the sun shines through a crack we can see fine motes of dust dancing in empty space.” That’s something you can still see. A mote of dust bordering upon emptiness cannot be seen with the ordinary eye.

Sutra:

“If one divides those fine motes of dust, their appearance is at the boundaries of form. Then divide those into seven parts.

Commentary:

“If one divides those fine motes of dust, their appearance is at the boundaries of form.” Motes of dust bordering on emptiness are the very finest, the most minute among things which have form. Nothing is smaller than they are. Still, they have an appearance of form which can be perceived. **“Then divide those into seven parts.** If you divide these finest of fine motes of dust which border upon emptiness into seven parts, so that they border even more upon emptiness, these divided motes are actually emptiness itself.” Basically there is no appearance of form. This is an explanation of the nature of earth.

P2 He explains the division in detail.

Sutra:

“Ananda, if this mote of dust bordering upon emptiness is divided and becomes emptiness, it should be that emptiness can give rise to form.

Commentary:

"Ananda, if this mote of dust bordering upon emptiness is divided and becomes emptiness" – although motes of dust bordering on emptiness are very small, they still have a visible shape. There is still something there. But, if the motes of dust bordering upon emptiness are divided into seven parts, they are truly and actually emptiness itself. Therefore, **"it should be that emptiness can give rise to form."** Form can become emptiness, and emptiness contains form within it.

Sutra:

"Just now you asked if mixing and uniting doesn't bring about the transformations of everything in the world.

Commentary:

"Just now you asked" – Ananda has just now asked – "**if mixing and uniting doesn't bring about the transformations of everything in the world.** Isn't that why there are all these changing and transforming appearances?"

Sutra:

"You should carefully consider how much emptiness mixes and unites to make a single mote of dust bordering upon emptiness, since it makes no sense to say that dust bordering on emptiness is composed of dust bordering on emptiness.

Commentary:

"You should carefully consider – take a look at this – **how much emptiness mixes and unites to make a single mote of dust bordering upon emptiness.** When you divide a mote of dust bordering upon emptiness, it becomes emptiness. But, to proceed in the opposite direction, how much emptiness must you mix and unite to make a mote of dust bordering upon emptiness? **Since it makes no sense to say that dust bordering on emptiness is composed of dust bordering on emptiness.** You should not say that motes of dust bordering upon emptiness combine to make motes of dust bordering upon emptiness. It is emptiness which must

unite to make motes of dust bordering upon emptiness. But how much emptiness would you say is needed? Would you use seven parts, since one mote of dust bordering upon emptiness divided into seven parts becomes emptiness? How much emptiness?" This is what he asked Ananda.

Sutra:

"Moreover, since motes of dust bordering upon emptiness can be reduced to emptiness, of how many motes of such form as this must emptiness be composed?

Commentary:

"Moreover, since motes of dust bordering upon emptiness can be reduced to emptiness" – since when they are divided they become united with emptiness – **"of how many motes of such form as this must emptiness be composed?"** How many particles of dust make up the entirety of empty space? How many motes of dust bordering upon emptiness are united into emptiness? That would not be a small number! Here the word "form" is used to represent the element earth.

Sutra:

"When these motes of form mass together, a mass of form does not make emptiness; when emptiness is massed together, a mass of emptiness does not make form. Besides, although form can be divided, how can emptiness be massed together?

Commentary:

"When these motes of form mass together, a mass of form does not make emptiness. You have been postulating that particles of form unite with particles of form in order to make emptiness; but actually, a union of particles of form cannot make emptiness." Didn't the Buddha just say, "It makes no sense to say that dust bordering on emptiness is composed of dust bordering on emptiness?" Now he says that motes bordering upon emptiness cannot unite with motes bordering upon emptiness to create emptiness. The motes of dust bordering on emptiness have already

become emptiness; how can there still be motes bordering upon emptiness to unite with each other? **"When emptiness is massed together –** suppose you say that you can combine emptiness to get motes of dust bordering upon emptiness – **a mass of emptiness does not make form.** Since it is empty, how can it also have a shape, a form, and an appearance? **Besides, although form can be divided –** when you have the appearance of form you can divide it up into minute particles – **how can emptiness be massed together?** Since emptiness is empty, what method can there be of making the emptiness come together? How can you unite emptiness with emptiness? It has already become emptiness, is it possible that you can bring the emptiness together further to form a mote of dust bordering upon emptiness?"

P3 He concludes by showing the substance and function.

Sutra:

"You simply do not know that in the Treasury of the Thus Come One the nature of form is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true form. Pure at its origin, it pervades the Dharma Realm. It accords with living beings' minds, in response to their capacity to know.

Commentary:

"You simply do not know, Ananda, **that in the Treasury of the Thus Come One –** the Treasury of the Thus Come One is the true mind, the Real Appearance. You don't know that if you investigate the question of emptiness and the motes of dust bordering upon emptiness to its primary source, you still won't be able to resolve it. But the principle is found in the Treasury of the Thus Come One: **The nature of form is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true form."** At its ultimate point, the appearance of form is true emptiness; and at its ultimate point, the nature of emptiness has true form. Basically, it is not defiled, not pure, not produced, not extinguished, and it neither increases nor diminishes. Basically, it is unmoving. In its basic nature, **"Pure at**

its origin, it pervades the Dharma Realm with nothing in excess and nothing deficient."

"The nature of form is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true form." This kind of wonderful function **"accords with living beings' minds, in response to their capacity to know."** It responds to their capacity: the extent of the wonder which each living being is capable of is revealed.

P4 He rejects the two theories for being mere conjectures.

Sutra:

"It is experienced to whatever extent is dictated by the law of karma. Ignorant of this fact, people in the world are so deluded as to assign its origin to causes and conditions or to spontaneity. These mistakes, which arise from the discriminations and reasoning processes of the conscious mind, are nothing but the play of empty words which have no real meaning.

Commentary:

"It is experienced to whatever extent is dictated by the law of karma." It accords with living beings' minds and appears in accordance with the karma of each living being, in the amount that each is capable of knowing. The nature of form is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true form. Pure in its origin, it pervades the Dharma Realm. This wonderful function follows the karmic responses of each living being and gives rise to the kind of retribution that each should receive.

"People in the world are so deluded as to assign its origin to causes and conditions." Who are they? They are people who cultivate according to sects outside the Way and provisional vehicles and ordinary people. They are confused about the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, which is pure at its origin and pervades the Dharma Realm. They do not recognize it. They believe it is based on causes and conditions. This is the attachment of adherents of the Small Vehicle: the dharma of causes and

conditions. **"Or** they assign it **to spontaneity."** Adherents of sects outside the Way are attached to the nature of spontaneity. How is it that they get cheated in this way? **"These mistakes, which arise from the discriminations and reasoning processes of the conscious mind" –** it is the distinction making conscious mind of adherents of the Small Vehicle, of sects outside the Way, and of ordinary people, making distinctions and calculations. They make calculations with considerations and distinctions. They speculate about things which have not yet happened, speculations which **"are nothing but the play of empty words which have no real meaning."** The false thinking, distinctions, and calculations of the conscious mind – whether you talk about causes and conditions or spontaneity – are all just words. None of it is real. There isn't any true and actual principle which can be spoken.

O2 The element fire.
P1 He reveals its nature and searches for it.

Sutra:

"Ananda, fire, which has no nature of its own, depends upon various causes and conditions for its existence. Consider a family in the city that has not yet eaten. When they wish to prepare food, they hold up a speculum to the sun, seeking fire.

Commentary:

"Ananda, fire, which has no nature of its own, depends upon various causes and conditions for its existence." The nature of fire has no substance of its own. There must be causes and conditions before it can arise. "Nature of its own" here refers not to a person but to the substance of fire. This passage of text should not be read, "I am devoid of fire," which is to say, "I haven't any temper." If you didn't have any fire in your nature, you would be a Bodhisattva.

Fire **"depends upon various causes and conditions for its existence."** It has no nature of its own. It is inherent in all conditions. When the causes and conditions for fire are present, fire will appear. If the causes and conditions are not there, there will be

no fire. Where is the nature of fire? The nature of fire pervades all places. Although it has no substance of its own, there is not a single place which is devoid of fire.

"Consider a family in the city that has not yet eaten. Ananda, take a look at a family in the city of Shravasti, that has not yet eaten. When they wish to prepare food, they go to the kitchen to make rice and vegetables. At this time, the sun is still shining; otherwise, fire could not come forth. **They hold up a speculum to the sun, seeking fire."** A speculum is a "fire mirror," made out of metal. Facing the sun, they hold the speculum in one hand, and in the other they hold a piece of moxa for tinder. The sun strikes the speculum, and the reflected light heats the tinder until it catches fire. This ancient method of seeking fire from the sun was used before there were matches. Further on in the text the Buddha asks whether the fire comes from the sun, from the speculum, or from the moxa tinder.

P2 He explains the search in detail.

Sutra:

"Ananda, let us look into your suggestion that the fire comes forth from mixing and uniting. By way of example, you and I and the twelve hundred and fifty bhikshus unite together to form a community. However, a careful analysis of the community reveals that every member composing it has his own body, birthplace, clan, and name. For instance, Shariputra is a Brahman, Uruvilva is of the Kashyapa clan, and you, Ananda, come from the Gautama family.

Commentary:

"Ananda, let us look into your suggestion that the fire comes forth from mixing and uniting. If there is a mixing and uniting, it certainly has to be apparent in some way. A lot of things coming together is called a mixing and uniting. What is it like? **By way of example, you and I and the twelve hundred and fifty bhikshus unite together to form a community.** It is like our assembly here,

Ananda. You and I and the twelve hundred and fifty bhikshus have now come together to form one assembly, but that one assembly is not a single thing. **However, a careful analysis of the community reveals that every member composing it has his own body.”** This group has come together as an assembly and this is called mixing and uniting. “Suppose you ask about and investigate each person’s origin. It is said to be a single assembly, but each person nonetheless has his own body. Not only that, but **each has his own body, birthplace, clan, and name.”** Those born into the Smith family are called Smith; those born into the Lee family are called Lee.

“For instance, Shariputra..” I have already discussed Shariputra. His mother’s eyes were as beautiful as those of the egret (white pelican). The egret is shari in Sanskrit, and putra means “son.” So his name means the “Son of Shari.” He was **“a Brahman.”** The Brahman caste is the highest of India’s four classes. “Brahman” is a Sanskrit word which is explained as meaning “pure lineage,” pure seed. But, actually, the human seed is not pure, it is the Brahman’s nature which is pure. “Brahman” also is explained as meaning “pure purpose.” They say that their patriarch came from the Brahma Heaven, and so they say they are of a pure lineage.

“Uruvilva is of the Kashyapa clan.” Uruvilva means “papaya grove.” He cultivated the Way beside a papaya grove, and so he called himself by that name. The name Kashyapa means “turtle clan.” They were so named because in the past their ancestors found a turtle with a map on its back.

“And you, Ananda, come from the Gautama family.” The name “Ananda” means “blissful.” He and Shakyamuni Buddha were both of the Gautama family. Later the Buddha changed to the Shakya clan. “Gautama” means “sugar cane.” It’s not known if his ancestors planted sugar cane, or if they liked to eat sugar cane, or just what the reason was that they took the name Gautama for their clan.

This passage notes that every person has his own ancestry and personal name. Although they come together as a single assembly, each person is still different. Each has his own name, his own appearance, and his own body. Shakyamuni Buddha points that out as a preface to his explanation of the element fire, which is mixed and united, but which has differences within it.

Sutra:

"Ananda, suppose fire existed because of mixing and uniting. When the hand holds up the speculum to the sun to seek fire, does the fire come out of the speculum? Does it come out of the moxa tinder? Or does it come from the sun?

Commentary:

"Ananda, suppose fire existed because of mixing and uniting." That is, when causes and conditions came together – when the hand held the speculum and there was sunlight and moxa tinder – these three kinds of causes and conditions mix and unite, and then there would be fire.

"When the hand holds up the speculum to the sun to seek fire – when the person seeking fire holds up the speculum in his hand – **does the fire come out of the speculum?** Would you say that the fire came out of the speculum? **Does it come out of the moxa tinder?** Does the tinder produce the fire? **Or does it come from the sun?** Does the fire come from the sun? Tell me where it comes from." This is also a case of mixing and uniting: there is the speculum, the sun, and the tinder of moxa, which catches fire very easily.

"In this case of mixing and uniting, where would you say the fire ultimately came from? Suppose you say it is the sun which alone brings forth fire; in that case the sun would be able to burn up the entire world. So it won't work to say it came from the sun. Suppose you say it comes from the speculum; yet, when the speculum is held in someone's hand, it isn't even the least bit warm. Fire is something warm, but the speculum isn't even warm. So it is illogical to say it comes from the speculum. Suppose you say it

comes from the moxa tinder. In the absence of the mirror and the sun, why doesn't it emit fire? So this is a case of mixing and uniting, but there are still distinctions within it."

Sutra:

"Suppose, Ananda, that it came from the sun. Not only would it burn the moxa tinder in your hand, but as it came across the groves of trees, it should burn them up as well.

Commentary:

"Suppose, Ananda, that it came from the sun – suppose you say the fire comes from the sun **– not only would it burn the moxa tinder in your hand –** the fire of the sun can burn up the moxa tinder in your hand **– but as it came across the groves of trees, it should burn them up as well."** The sun is far away; and its heat passes over a lot of groves of trees. If the fire were to come from the sun, the trees would also be burned up. If the sun can burn the moxa tinder, why can't it burn the trees and grasses? And yet they do not burn up.

Sutra:

"Suppose that it came from the speculum. Since it came out from within the speculum to ignite the moxa tinder, why doesn't the speculum melt? Yet your hand that holds it feels no heat; how, then, could the speculum melt?

Commentary:

"Suppose that it came from the speculum. Since it came out from within the speculum to ignite the moxa tinder – suppose you say that the fire comes out of the speculum spontaneously to ignite the tinder, but if the fire is within the speculum, **"why doesn't the speculum melt?"** According to the Chinese explanation of the five elements, fire overcomes metal. It will melt metals, such as gold, silver, copper, iron. If the fire came from the mirror, the mirror would melt. "**However, your hand that holds it feels no heat; how, then, could the speculum melt?** The mirror itself isn't even warm. How could it melt?"

Sutra:

"Suppose that the fire came from the moxa tinder. Then why is fire generated only when the bright mirror comes into contact with the dazzling light?

Commentary:

"Suppose you say the fire is produced from the tinder. **Suppose that the fire came from the moxa tinder. Then why is fire generated only when the bright mirror comes into contact with the dazzling light?** The light of the sun and the light from the speculum shine on the tinder and then there is fire. If the fire were to come from the moxa tinder, then the tinder should produce fire by itself. It shouldn't be necessary to wait for the sunlight and the speculum to start the fire. So it is not reasonable for you to say that the fire comes from the tinder, either."

Sutra:

"Furthermore, on closer examination you will find the speculum held in hands, the sun high up in the sky, and moxa grown from the ground. Where does the fire come from? How can it travel some distance to reach here?

Commentary:

"Furthermore, on closer examination – you should look into this in greater detail – **you will find the speculum held in hands, the sun high up in the sky, and moxa grown from the ground. Where does the fire come from? How can it travel some distance to reach here?** The three – speculum, sunlight, and tinder – come from different places. Where, ultimately, does the fire come from? Where is the home that it leaves to come here?" the Buddha asks Ananda. It can't reasonably be said to originate in the hand, the sky, or the earth, the three places mentioned above.

Sutra:

"The sun and the speculum cannot mix and unite, since they are far apart from each other. Nor can it be that the fire exists spontaneously, without an origin.

Commentary:

“The sun and the speculum cannot mix and unite, since they are far apart from each other. The sunlight and the speculum are very, very far removed from each other. You cannot say they mix and you cannot say they unite. Why? They do not come together; how could they mix and unite? Now the twelve hundred and fifty great Bhikshus are here together, but how can you say the sun and the speculum are together? They are very far apart. ‘Furthermore, upon closer examination you will find the mirror held in the hands, the sun high in the sky, and the moxa grown in the ground. Where does fire come from? How can it travel some distance to reach here?’”

“Nor can it be that the fire exists spontaneously, without an origin.” But it should not be that the fire doesn’t come from anywhere at all but simply exists of itself.

P3 He concludes by showing the substance and function.

Sutra:

“You simply do not know that in the Treasury of the Thus Come One the nature of fire is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true fire. Pure at its origin, it pervades the Dharma Realm. It accords with living beings’ minds, in response to their capacity to know.

Commentary:

“Ananda, **you simply do not know** that the principles explained above are all contained **in the Treasury of the Thus Come One.** Where have you gone to look for them? **The nature of fire is true emptiness.**” The property of fire by nature has true emptiness within it. **“And the nature of emptiness is true fire.”** Within the property of emptiness is true fire. **“Pure at its origin –** it is fundamentally pure **– it pervades the Dharma Realm.”** This element of fire pervades the Dharma Realm. It is everywhere. **“It accords with living beings’ minds, in response to their capacity to know.”**

Sutra:

"Ananda, you should know that fire is generated in the place where a speculum is held up to the sunlight, and fire will be generated everywhere if specula are held up to the sunlight throughout the Dharma Realm. Since fire can come forth throughout the whole world, can there be any fixed place to which it is confined?

Commentary:

"Ananda, you should know that fire is generated in the place where a speculum is held up to the sunlight, and fire will be generated everywhere if specula are held up to the sunlight throughout the Dharma Realm." If everyone in the world held up a speculum to the sun, fire would arise everywhere. "**Since fire can come forth throughout the whole world, can there be any fixed place to which it is confined?** Where would you say the fire is? Where does it come from? Therefore, what we call the element fire pervades the Dharma Realm."

P4 He rejects the two theories for being mere conjectures.

Sutra:

"It is experienced to whatever extent is dictated by the law of karma. Ignorant of this fact, people in the world are so deluded as to assign its origin to causes and conditions or to spontaneity. These mistakes, which arise from the discriminations and reasoning processes of the conscious mind, are nothing but the play of empty words which have no real meaning.

O3 The element water.
P1 He reveals the nature and searches for it.

Sutra:

"Ananda, water is by nature unstable. It may keep on flowing or come to a stop. Kapila, Chakra, Padma, and Hasta, and other great magicians of Shravasti often hold up

instruments to the light of the full moon at midnight to extract from the moon the essence of water to mix with their drugs.

Commentary:

“Ananda, water is by nature unstable.” Earth and fire have been discussed; now water will be explained. Each of these is an element, for which the Chinese character is *da* (大), which literally means “great.” These elements are said to be “great” because they pervade all places, inexhaustibly.

The nature of water is unstable. It is said,

When the opening is to the east,
the water flows east;
When the opening is to the west,
the water flows west.

If you gouge out the bank of a pool, river, stream, lake, or sea, the water will flow out in whatever direction you make the cut. A body of water has no fixed boundaries, so the text says that water is by nature unstable. **“It may keep on flowing or come to a stop.”** It stops and goes; it is not constant or uniform. **“Kapila, Chakra, Padma, and Hasta, and other great magicians of Shravasti” –** the immortal, Kapila, of the City of Abundance and Virtue, was an adherent of the “religion of the yellow haired.” It was explained earlier that Matangi was a follower of a magician of the religion of the yellow haired and that she had learned the “former Brahma Heaven mantra” from him.

Besides these four great magicians, there were many others – too many to be mentioned by name – so the text says, “and other great magicians.” Magicians deal with illusion, with what is false and empty. They **“often hold up instruments to the light of the full moon at midnight to extract from the moon the essence of water to mix with their drugs.”** They wanted to use the moon essence in their illusory medicines which confused people. These medicines were like the present day LSD, which, although not mixed with essence of the moon, is nonetheless close to the kind of

drug being discussed. They caused people to see everything as strange and to think of themselves as having already become enlightened. They caused nervous disorders and caused people to be upside-down and unreliable. On the night of the full moon, the fifteenth day of the month in the lunar calendar, they made use of instruments – a square pan and a crystal ball – to extract the essence of water. When the crystal ball is held in the moonlight on the night of the fifteenth, water will come forth and gather in the pan. The water is then used to mix with the drugs. There probably isn't much water that comes forth.

P2 He explains the search in detail.

Sutra:

"Does the water come out of the crystal ball? Does it exist of itself in space? Or, does it come from the moon?

Commentary:

The water comes forth on the night of the full moon and collects in the pan. **"Does the water come out of the crystal ball? Does it exist of itself in space?** Does the water come from space? **Or, does it come from the moon?** Does it come out of the moonlight?"

Sutra:

"Ananda, suppose the water came from the distant moon. Water then should also flow from all the grass and trees when the moonlight passes over them on its way to the crystal ball. If it does flow from them, why wait for it to come out of the crystal ball? If it does not flow from the trees, then it is clear that the water does not descend from the moon.

Commentary:

"Ananda, now you should think about it; where does that water come from? **Suppose the water came from the distant moon.** If you say the water comes from the moonlight, that it is the water of the essence of the moon, **water then should also flow from all the grass and trees when the moonlight passes over them on its way**

to the crystal ball.” The moonlight must come from a long way off to cause the instruments to flow forth water. Above it was stated that when the fire passed over the groves and trees they should burn up. Now the groves and trees should all flow forth. That means water should come out of all of them. Whatever place the moonlight passes over, water should flow forth there. **“If it does flow from them, why wait for it to come out of the crystal ball?”** If the groves and trees all emit water, there is no reason to wait for there to be a crystal ball in order to get water. “**If it does not flow from the trees,** if the groves and trees do not flow forth water, **then it is clear that the water does not descend from the moon.** Then you should understand that the water does not come down from the moon.”

Sutra:

“If it came from the crystal balls, then it should flow from the crystal all the time. Why would they have to wait for midnight and the light of the full moon to receive it?

Commentary:

“If it came from the crystal balls – if you say the water flows forth from the crystal ball **– then it should flow from the crystal all the time. Why would they have to wait for midnight and the light of the full moon to receive it?”** Why wait for the arrival of the fifteenth of the month to seek the water? If it were the crystal ball that emits the water, it should come forth at any time at all. So now it has been proven that the water does not come from the moon, and it does not come from the instruments.

Sutra:

“If it came from space, which is by nature boundless, it would flow everywhere, until everything between earth and sky was submerged. How, then, could there still be travel by water, land, and space?

Commentary:

"If it came from space, which is by nature boundless – can you tell where the bounds of space are? Can you find them? Since space has no bounds, the water **would flow everywhere**... If, in fact, the water came from space, the water would have no bounds, either. The nature of space is boundless, and you say that water flows forth from within space, and so water should not have any bounds, either. ...**until everything between earth and sky was submerged.** Everything would turn into a great sea, and everyone, from the realm of people up through the heavens, would drown. **How, then, could there still be travel by water, land, and space?"** Several thousand years ago the Buddha was already talking about air travel, though there were no airplanes at that time. He knew long ago that there would be air travel and space travel. He says that if everything from the realm of people up to the realm of the gods turned into a great sea, there would only be travel by water; there wouldn't be any dry land or any space. But this is not the case.

Sutra:

"Furthermore, upon closer examination you will find that the moon moves through the sky, the crystal ball is held in the hand, and the pan for receiving the water is put there by someone; but, where does the water that flows into the pan come from?

Commentary:

"Furthermore, upon closer examination – you should look into it in detail – **you will find that the moon moves through the sky."** Now, it is not necessarily the case that the moon travels through the sky, but that is the way the text describes it. In the final analysis, when the moon travels in the sky, how far does it go in a single step? And how far does it have to travel to get where it is going? Pay no attention to this point. **"The crystal ball is held in the hand, and the pan for receiving the water is put there by someone."** The pan was placed there by a person. The moon and

the crystal ball and the pan all have a definite place. **"But, where does the water that flows into the pan come from?"** The Buddha has just asked whether the water comes from the crystal ball, from the moon, or from space. Where, then, does it come from? How does the water get to the pan?

Sutra:

"The moon and the crystal balls cannot mix or unite, since they are far apart. Nor can it be that the essence of water exists spontaneously without an origin.

Commentary:

"The moon and the crystal balls cannot mix or unite, since they are far apart. You may say that the moon and the crystal ball mix and unite to bring about the water; however, being so far apart, how can they unite? It's not possible. **Nor can it be that the essence of water exists spontaneously without an origin."** The same principle holds for water as was stated for the element of fire. It cannot be that the water comes from nowhere but suddenly appears of itself in the pan. There is no such principle.

P3 He concludes by showing the substance and function.

Sutra:

"You still do not know that in the Treasury of the Thus Come One the nature of water is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true water. Pure in its origin, it pervades the Dharma Realm. It accords with living beings' minds, in response to their capacity to know.

Commentary:

"Ananda, **you still do not know that in the Treasury of the Thus Come One the nature of water is true emptiness.**" The nature, replete with water, is actually true emptiness. **"And the nature of emptiness is true water."** The nature, replete with emptiness, has truth within it. "Where do you say it comes from, then? It comes from the Treasury of the Thus Come One." It is

found in the true minds of all of us living beings. We are replete not only with water, but also with fire, wind, and earth. They are all complete in our minds. Earth, water, fire, wind, emptiness, perception, and consciousness, the seven elements, are all complete in our minds. But, though they all exist there, they are not mixed together, messed up, or murky.

"Pure in its origin, it pervades the Dharma Realm. The nature of water is pure at its origin and pervades the Dharma Realm. You should know that within it there is wonderful existence." Within true emptiness there is wonderful existence. If you contemplate these principles, you can come to understand them. In other words, when you yourself have *kung fu* – spiritual skill – when you sit in meditation and gain samadhi power and give rise to genuine wisdom, then you can understand that the principles explained in the Sutra are true and not false. But, this principle will not be easy to understand now if you are trying to fathom it with your conscious mind.

"It accords with living beings' minds, in response to their capacity to know." Whatever the minds of living beings in the nine Dharma Realms seek can be given them in accord with their intent. Whatever anyone wants they can have, in whatever amount they need. If you need to drink a glass of water, you are given a glass of water; if you need two glasses of water, you have two to drink. Living beings' wishes are fulfilled in accord with their needs.

Sutra:

"A crystal ball is held up at a certain place, and there water comes forth. If crystal balls were held up throughout the Dharma Realm, then throughout the Dharma Realm water would come forth. Since water can come forth throughout the entire world, can there be any fixed place to which it is confined?

Commentary:

Where would you say water comes from? The text tells you here. How is it said to be in the Treasury of the Thus Come One?

"A crystal ball is held up at a certain place" – one person decides he wants some water and holds up the crystal ball – **"and there water comes forth. If crystal balls were held up throughout the Dharma Realm –** if to the ends of the earth, everyone held up a crystal ball to seek water – **then throughout the Dharma Realm water would come forth."** Water would flow from all the billion worlds. All that is needed is someone seeking water. **"Since water can come forth throughout the entire world –** if it is possible for it to be produced everywhere in the world – **can there be any fixed place to which it is confined?** If it is everywhere in the entire world, what place can you say it originally comes from? If it comes from a certain place, it can come to me but can't go to you. If it goes to you, it can't come to me. But, if everyone holds up the crystal ball, water will come forth for everyone. That is precisely the nature of water in the Treasury of the Thus Come One – not dwelling anywhere, and yet dwelling everywhere. It is absolutely everywhere, but it can also be said that it is absent from every place, because if you don't have the crystal ball, if you don't employ the method, then it's not there. The same is true of the nature of fire.

P4 He rejects the two theories for being mere calculations.

Sutra:

"It is experienced to whatever extent is dictated by the law of karma. Ignorant of this fact, people in the world are so deluded as to assign their origin to causes and conditions or to spontaneity. These mistakes, which arise from the discriminations and reasoning processes of the conscious mind, are nothing but the play of empty words which have no real meaning.

O4 The element wind.
P1 He reveals its nature and explains how it brushes against someone.

Sutra:

“Ananda, by nature, the wind has no substance, and its movements and stillness are erratic. You always adjust your robe as you enter the great assembly. When the corner of your samghati brushes the person next to you, there is a slight breeze which stirs against that person’s face.

Commentary:

The Buddha spoke again to Ananda, **“Ananda, by nature, the wind has no substance.** Let me tell you about the wind, now. **Its movements and stillness are erratic.”** Sometimes it is in motion, sometimes it is still. “**You always adjust your robe as you enter the great assembly. When the corner of your** samghati **brushes the person next to you, there is a slight breeze which stirs against that person’s face.”** “Samghati” is a Sanskrit word which translates in several ways. It is the “many pieced robe” (雜碎衣 *tsa sui yi*), because it is composed of one hundred eight pieces of cloth made in patterns of four long and one short. This robe is also called “the host’s robe” (祖衣 *chu yi*) and “the great robe” (大衣 *da yi*). It is the robe worn by the Dharma speaking Host. Of the three robes of a left home person, one is five pieces, one is seven pieces, and this one, the samghati, is the “great robe” with the most pieces. When you walk by someone, the corner of your robe brushes against them, your robe makes a breeze. As you move by, a breath of air passes over the face of that person.

Sutra:

“Does this wind come from the corner of the kashaya, does it arise from emptiness, or is it produced from the face of the person brushed by the wind?

Commentary:

“**Does this wind come from the corner of the** kashaya?” Does the breeze that blows across the person’s face come from the corner

of the kashaya, that is, the samghati? **"Does it arise from emptiness?"** Does the wind come out of empty space? **"Or is it produced from the face of the person brushed by the wind?"** Does the breeze originate from the other person's face? "Kashaya" is a Sanskrit word which translates as "mute colored" (壞色 *huai shai*) and indicates that it is "clothing for getting out of the dust" (離塵服 *li ch'en fu*)

P2 He explains its brushing against someone in detail.

Sutra:

"Ananda, if the wind comes from the corner of the kashaya, you are then clad in the wind, and your kashaya should fly about and leave your body. I am now speaking dharma in the midst of the assembly, and my robe remains motionless and hangs straight down. You should look closely at my robe to see whether there is any wind in it. It cannot be that the wind is stored somewhere in the robe, either.

Commentary:

"Ananda," the Buddha again called to Ananda, **"if the wind comes from the corner of the** kashaya, **you are then clad in the wind, and your** kashaya **should fly about and leave your body.** The robe should separate from your body; in that case it would be that the wind came from the corner of the robe. **I am now speaking dharma in the midst of the assembly, and my robe remains motionless and hangs straight down."** Here the Buddha refers to himself as "I". "'I am now speaking Dharma in the midst of the Assembly, and my robe remains motionless and hangs straight down.' Take a look at it." **"You should look closely at my robe to see whether there is any wind in it.** You see my robe hanging down; where is the wind? Is there any wind? **It cannot be that the wind is stored somewhere in the robe, either.** You should not say that there is a place in my robe which harbors the wind and holds it there until it is time for it to blow."

Sutra:

"If it arose from emptiness, why wouldn't the wind brush against the man even when your robe did not move? Emptiness is constant in nature; thus, the wind should constantly arise. When there was no wind, the emptiness should disappear. You can perceive the disappearance of the wind; but, what would the disappearance of emptiness look like? If it did arise and disappear, it could not be what is called emptiness. Since it is what is called emptiness, how can it generate wind?

Commentary:

"If it arose from emptiness – if you say the wind comes out of empty space – **why wouldn't the wind brush against the man even when your robe did not move?** The wind comes from the emptiness, but when your robe is not moving, there is no wind. Why not? Why don't you feel the wind blowing? **Emptiness is constant in nature."** Emptiness is unchanging and constant in nature. **"Thus, the wind should constantly arise."** If wind arose from emptiness, there should always be a wind, since emptiness is constant and unchanging. It should not be that sometimes there is wind and sometimes not.

"When there was no wind, the emptiness should disappear." The Buddha just pointed out that if wind is produced in emptiness, there should always be wind. The converse is that if there is a time when there is no wind, the emptiness should disappear. Without wind, the emptiness would be obliterated. **"You can perceive the disappearance of the wind; but, what would the disappearance of emptiness look like?"** When the wind is not blowing, it is still. People can sense this; they have an awareness of the absence of wind. But, what would the disappearance of emptiness look like? What would it be like if empty space were obliterated? Can empty space disappear? Basically, emptiness has neither form nor appearance; how could it have a disappearance? Basically, emptiness cannot be obliterated. And so the Buddha deliberately asks Ananda this difficult question.

"If it did arise and disappear, it could not be what is called emptiness. Since it is what is called emptiness, how can it generate wind?" If there is production and extinction in it, it is not what is called emptiness; it is what is called form and appearance. For example, wind can move and be still, and that is a kind of arising and disappearing. And so it is considered a kind of form, not emptiness. Emptiness is called emptiness because there is nothing inside it at all; how then could wind arise from it? Is there any trace of the wind coming out of emptiness? Any pathway for it? What is that pathway like? There isn't any. This is proof that the wind does not come out of emptiness.

Sutra:

"If the wind came from the face of the person by your side, it would blow upon you while you set your robe in order. Why would it blow backwards upon the person from whom it was generated?

Commentary:

"If the wind came from the face of the person by your side – if you say that the wind arose from the face which was brushed by the wind – **it would blow upon you.** It makes sense that wind coming from another's face should blow on you **while you set your robe in order. Why would it blow backwards upon the person from whom it was generated?** How is it that when you straighten your robes it blows on someone else's face? If the wind were produced from that person's face, it should blow on you first. Why, then, when you adjust your clothes, does the breeze from the corner of your robe blow first onto the person's face?"

Sutra:

"Upon closer examination, you will find that the robe is set in order by yourself, the face blown by the wind belongs to the person by your side, and the emptiness is tranquil and not involved in movement. Where, then, does the wind come from that blows in this place?

Commentary:

"Ananda, **upon closer examination –** you should look into this well **– you will find that the robe is set in order by yourself.** It is you who move the robe. **The face blown by the wind belongs to the person by your side.** It is another person's face. **And the emptiness is tranquil."** There is no movement in emptiness: it is there as if asleep, sleeping sweetly without any restlessness. Even breath is cut off. One could say it was like a dead person, but a dead person has form and appearance, while emptiness has no form or appearance. It is tranquil and unmoving, "and not involved in movement," whereas the wind blows back and forth, flowing and moving like water. **"Where, then, does the wind come from that blows in this place?"** Where does the element wind come from?

Sutra:

"The wind and emptiness cannot mix and unite, since they are different from each other. Nor should it be that the wind spontaneously exists without an origin.

Commentary:

"The wind and emptiness cannot mix and unite" – they cannot work together; wind is wind and emptiness is emptiness – **"since they are different from each other. Nor should it be that the wind spontaneously exists without an origin.** Basically, the wind does not have a substantial nature, but if it did, it should not be that its substance arose from nothing. It cannot be that the wind exists without having come forth from anywhere. Where, then, does it come from? I have told you many times, and yet you still don't understand? It comes forth from the Treasury of the Thus Come One."

P3 He concludes by showing the substance and function.

Sutra:

"You still do not know that in the Treasury of the Thus Come One the nature of wind is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true wind. Pure at its origin, it pervades the

Dharma Realm. It accords with living beings' minds, in response to their capacity to know.

Commentary:

"Ananda, **you still do not know that in the Treasury of the Thus Come One the nature of wind is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true wind.**" The accumulated nature of wind is genuine emptiness, and the accumulated nature of emptiness is the source of the genuine wind. **"Pure at its origin, it pervades the Dharma Realm."** Within it is a pure origin which pervades the Dharma Realm.

"It accords with living beings' minds, in response to their capacity to know." This nature which pervades the Dharma Realm accords with living beings' minds, in response to their capacity to know. The response and the Way intertwine so that each living being of the nine Dharma Realms has its own awareness, its own scope.

Sutra:

"Ananda, in the same way that you, as one person, move your robe slightly, and a small wind arises, so a wind arises in all countries if there is a similar movement throughout the Dharma Realm. Since it can be produced throughout the world, how can there be any fixed place to which it is confined?

Commentary:

"Ananda, in the same way that you, as one person, move your robe slightly, and a small wind arises – you move your robe and a breeze comes forth **– so a wind arises in all countries if there is a similar movement throughout the Dharma Realm."** If all the people throughout the Dharma Realm moved their clothing, then in all countries a wind would arise. **"Since it can be produced throughout the world,** in all places, by all people, **how can there be any fixed place to which it is confined?** Ultimately, where would you say the wind comes from?"

P4 He rejects the two theories for being mere conjectures.

Sutra:

"It is experienced to whatever extent is dictated by the law of karma. Ignorant of this fact, people in the world are so deluded as to assign their origin to causes and conditions or to spontaneity. These mistakes, which arise from the discriminations and reasoning processes of the conscious mind, are nothing but the play of empty words which bear no real meaning.

Commentary:

"It is experienced to whatever extent is dictated by the law of karma." The wind arises as a result of the karmic retribution which manifests for each person. But, the externalist religions of the world, as well as ignorant people and those of the Two Vehicles, **"are so deluded as to assign their origin to causes and conditions or to spontaneity."** People without wisdom get confused, doubtful, and they say that the source of the wind is in causes and conditions. People of the provisional vehicle make the same mistake. Adherents of external religions confusedly consider it to be spontaneous in nature – some think that the wind arises spontaneously. This kind of thinking, this kind, of guesswork, **"These mistakes, which arise from the discriminations and reasoning processes of the conscious mind,** are all the function of the discriminations and considerations of the mind-consciousness. It is **nothing but the play of empty words which bear no real meaning."** Things which can only be discussed are not real. Does the text say here that this matter is apart from the manifestation of words and speech? It says that adherents of external religions and those of the provisional vehicle can only talk. And what they talk about is without real meaning. None of it is true; it's not right.

O5 The element emptiness.
P1 He reveals the nature by digging for it.

Sutra:

"Ananda, the nature of emptiness has no shape; it is only apparent because of form. For instance, Shravasti is far from the river, so when the Kshatriyas, Brahmans, Vaishyas, Shudras, Bharadvajas, Chandalas, and so forth, build their homes there, they dig wells seeking water. Where a foot of earth is removed, there is a foot of emptiness; where as many as ten feet of earth are removed, there are ten feet of emptiness. The depth of the emptiness corresponds to the amount of earth removed.

Commentary:

"Ananda, the nature of emptiness has no shape; it is only apparent because of form." Having finished explaining the element wind, the Buddha now discusses the element of emptiness.

How can emptiness be an element? Emptiness, too, pervades the Dharma Realm. It is like the earth, water, fire, and wind already discussed. He says, "The nature of emptiness has no shape." If there is a shape, it is not emptiness. Is there any emptiness in places where there are shapes? Yes, there is not less emptiness in places where there are shapes and forms, and not more emptiness in places where there are no shapes or forms.

"You say 'If we dig a big pit in the ground, the pit will be filled with emptiness. Isn't that a case of there being more emptiness?'

"Before you dug the pit, the emptiness was not less. The emptiness was contained in the earth." It is the same principle as "Ice is water and water is ice." Although the ice is hard, water is within it. In this case, the earth has been dug up to reveal emptiness, but actually wherever there is a shape there is emptiness within. It's not that there isn't any emptiness there. It's not the case that there is no emptiness just here where there's a table. There is still emptiness here. Where is the emptiness? It's within the table. Thus,

emptiness pervades all places. It's everywhere. The text says, "It is only apparent because of form." Emptiness hasn't any shape or form; you can't see it. Only because of the manifestation of shapes and forms can you distinguish places where there is emptiness. If there were no forms, you would be unaware of emptiness.

"For instance, Shravasti is far from the river, thus the people of that city can't use the river water. **So when the Kshatriyas,** the royal class, the **Brahmans**, the priestly class, the **Vaishyas –** the Vaishyas are the business class – the **Shudras**, who are the servant class, the **Bharadvajas, Chandalas, and so forth" –** those of mean and lowly birth. Chandalas are the butchers, the lowliest people in India. In India, the Chandalas had to carry flutes and play upon them as they walked on the streets to let people know they were approaching. They had to separate themselves from the other people. "When they **build their homes there, they dig wells seeking water. Where a foot of earth is removed, there is a foot of emptiness.**" If you take a foot of dirt out of the earth, a foot of emptiness will appear there. **"Where as many as ten feet of earth are removed, there are ten feet of emptiness."** The more you dig down in search of water, the more emptiness will appear. **"The depth of the emptiness corresponds to the amount of earth removed."** That's the way it is at the site of a well.

P2 He explains the digging in detail.

Sutra:

"Does this emptiness come out of the dirt, does it exist because of the digging, or does it arise of itself without a cause?

Commentary:

"Now I'm asking you, Ananda. When a well is drilled, emptiness is created. What do you say? **Does this emptiness come out of the dirt?** Is it because of the dirt that the emptiness appears? **Does it exist because of the digging?** Is it because the earth is drilled that the emptiness exists? **Or does it arise of itself without**

a cause? Is it that the emptiness arises of itself, for no reason at all? Where do you say the emptiness comes from?"

Sutra:

"Moreover, Ananda, suppose this emptiness arose of itself without any cause. Why wasn't it unobstructed before the earth was dug? Quite the contrary, one saw only the great earth; there was no emptiness evident in it.

Commentary:

"Moreover, Ananda, suppose this emptiness arose of itself without any cause." Suppose it came about by itself without any reason and without any conditions for it. **"Why wasn't it unobstructed before the earth was dug?"** Why wasn't it free from obstruction? Before the earth was drilled there was an obstruction; something was blocking the emptiness. **"Quite the contrary, one saw only the great earth; there was no emptiness evident in it."** There wasn't a place of emptiness that could be penetrated. It was exactly the opposite of penetrating.

Sutra:

"If emptiness came about because of the removal of the earth, we should have seen it entering the well as the earth was removed. If emptiness was not seen entering the well when the earth was first removed, how can we say that emptiness came about because of the removal of the earth?

Commentary:

"If emptiness came about because of the removal of the earth – if emptiness took advantage of the removal of earth to make its appearance **– we should have seen it entering the well as the earth was removed.** You should be able to see how the emptiness goes in." How does emptiness go in? Basically emptiness has no form or appearance; how can it be seen? Emptiness can't go in; emptiness is not produced and not extinguished. It does not go in or come out. **"If emptiness was not seen entering the well when the earth was first removed" –** if one does not see any emptiness go

in when the earth is removed **– "how can we say that emptiness came about because of the removal of the earth?** If you don't see the emptiness go in when the earth comes out, how can you say that emptiness exists because of the removal of the earth? You can't explain it that way."

Sutra:

"If there is no going in or coming out, then there is no difference between the earth and emptiness. Why, then, doesn't emptiness come out of the well along with the earth in the process of digging?

Commentary:

"If there is no going in or coming out – if you want to say that the emptiness neither goes in or comes out..." The Buddha suspects that Ananda has another argument: "Emptiness is merely emptiness; it doesn't go in or come out." However, if it neither goes in nor comes out, **"then there is no difference between the earth and emptiness.** If we accept your theory that emptiness doesn't go in or come out, then there's no distinction between emptiness and earth. If there's no distinction between them, emptiness is just earth and earth is just emptiness. Emptiness and earth are one. Emptiness and earth are non dual. Since they are the same, **why, then, doesn't emptiness come out of the well along with the earth in the process of digging?** You say that they are the same, so when the earth comes out, why doesn't the emptiness follow it?

Sutra:

"If emptiness appeared because of the digging, then the digging would bring out emptiness instead of the earth. If emptiness does not come out because of the digging, then the digging yields only earth. Why, then, do we see emptiness appear as the well is dug?

Commentary:

"Suppose you say that **emptiness appeared because of the digging** into the earth. If that is reasonable, **then** it follows that **the**

digging would bring out emptiness instead of the earth.” The drilling should remove the emptiness, not the earth. Why, then, does it remove the earth? **“If emptiness does not come out because of the digging –** if you say that it is not because of drilling the well that the emptiness appears **– then the digging yields only earth. Why, then, do we see emptiness appear as the well is dug?** Since what the drilling removes is earth, why do you then see emptiness? How does the emptiness come into being?

Sutra:

“You should consider this even more carefully. Look into it deeply, and you will find that the digging comes from the person’s hand as its means of conveyance, and the earth exists because of a change in the ground. But what causes the emptiness to appear?

Commentary:

The Buddha tells Ananda, **“You should consider this even more carefully.** Investigate this. Really **look into it deeply** and in detail. **And you will find that the digging comes from the person’s hand as its means of conveyance.”** The drilling is done with a spade. **“And the earth exists because of a change in the ground.”** That is, the dirt moves out of the earth and the well is made. “**But what causes the emptiness to appear?** How does the emptiness come about?”

Sutra:

“The digging and the emptiness, one being substantial and the other insubstantial, do not function on the same plane. They do not mix and unite. Nor can it be that emptiness exists spontaneously without an origin.

Commentary:

“The digging is substantial, and the **emptiness is insubstantial.”** The drilling is the false, the emptiness is the true. “They **do not function on the same plane.**” Digging and emptiness don’t function together. **“They do not mix and unite.”** So in this there is

no mixing and there is no uniting. **"Nor can it be that emptiness exists spontaneously without an origin."** But, what is emptiness ultimately like? How does it arise? It's not the case that emptiness gives rise to itself. It's not that emptiness comes into being without any reason, with no cause at all.

P3 He puts them together and admonishes him to awaken.

Sutra:

"Although the nature of emptiness is completely pervasive, it is basically unmoving. You should know that it and earth, water, fire, and wind are together called the five elements. Their natures are true and perfectly fused, and all are the Treasury of the Thus Come One, fundamentally devoid of production and extinction.

Commentary:

"Although the nature of emptiness is completely pervasive, it is basically unmoving. You should know that it and earth, water, fire, and wind are together called the five elements. Their natures are true and perfectly fused." The nature of emptiness is also true and not false; it is perfect and perfectly fused without obstruction. **"All are the Treasury of the Thus Come One.** Why is it perfectly fused without obstruction? It comes forth from the Treasury of the Thus Come One and is **fundamentally devoid of production and extinction."** So it is neither produced nor destroyed.

Sutra:

"Ananda, your mind is murky and confused, and you do not awaken to the fact that the source of the four elements is none other than the Treasury of the Thus Come One. Why do you not take a look at emptiness to see whether it is subject to such relativities as coming and going?

Commentary:

"Ananda, your mind is murky and confused. You are so stupid! Your mind is too murky, too lacking in understanding, **and you do not awaken to the fact that the source of the four elements is none other than the Treasury of the Thus Come One.** I have explained the four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind to you before, but you still don't understand. You are still mixed up. You don't understand that the four elements are basically the Treasury of the Thus Come One. Therefore, now you should **take a look at emptiness to see whether it is subject to such relativities as coming and going?** Does emptiness ultimately come out or go in? Or is it that it doesn't come out and doesn't go in, either? Look it over; consider it carefully."

P4 He concludes by showing the substance and function.

Sutra:

"You do not know at all that in the Treasury of the Thus Come One the nature of enlightenment is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true enlightenment. Pure at its origin, it pervades the Dharma Realm.

Commentary:

"You do not know at all..." Now it has reached the point that Ananda doesn't understand at all. **"…that in the Treasury of the Thus Come One the nature of enlightenment is true emptiness."** The essence of the nature of enlightenment is the nature of the substance of true emptiness. **"And the nature of emptiness is true enlightenment."** And the essence of the nature of emptiness is the nature of the substance of genuine, wonderful enlightenment. **"Pure at its origin –** this state of being is pure at its source, and , **it pervades the Dharma Realm."** Thus, emptiness and the four elements mentioned above are all pure at their origin, and they all pervade the Dharma Realm. Since that is the case, how can they go in or come out?

Sutra:

"It accords with living beings' minds, in response to their capacity to know.

Commentary:

"It accords with living beings' minds throughout the nine Dharma Realms, **in response to their capacity to know."** They come to know however much they should know, whether it is a little or a lot, big or small.

Sutra:

"Ananda, if in one place there is a well empty of earth, there will be emptiness filling up that one place. If there are wells empty of earth in the ten directions, there will be emptiness filling them up in the ten directions. Since it fills up the ten directions, is there any fixed location in which emptiness is found?

Commentary:

"Ananda, I will now tell you clearly. **If in one place there is a well empty of earth, there will be emptiness filling up that one place –** the emptiness fills up the whole well. **If there are wells empty of earth in the ten directions, there will be emptiness filling them up in the ten directions."** If there were wells everywhere throughout the ten directions, the ten directions would be replete with emptiness. Emptiness everywhere follows the principle explained above. **"Since it fills up the ten directions –** since there is emptiness in every place, anywhere there is a well there will be emptiness. **Is there any fixed location in which emptiness is found?** Can you still say that there is a place that emptiness comes from and a place it goes to? It doesn't come or go."

P5 He rejects the two theories for being mere conjectures.

Sutra:

“It is experienced to whatever extent is dictated by the law of karma. Ignorant of this fact, people in the world are so deluded as to assign their origin to causes and conditions or to spontaneity. These mistakes, which arise from the discriminations and reasoning processes of the conscious mind, are nothing but the play of empty words which bear no real meaning.

Commentary:

“It is experienced to whatever extent is dictated by the law of karma.” According to the karmic obstacles of living beings, such karmic retributions as these arise. They come about through the wonderful functioning of the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. “But, **ignorant of this fact, people in the world –** adherents of the provisional teaching, ordinary people, and adherents of externalist religions, who lack wisdom – **are so deluded as to assign their origin to causes and conditions.** They are confused about this principle and call it causes and conditions. Adherents of other religions say that it is the principle of spontaneity; they ascribe the arisal of emptiness to **spontaneity. These mistakes, which arise from the discriminations and reasoning processes of the conscious mind –** it is a case of using the considering, discriminating, conscious mind to distinguish and calculate. They **are nothing but the play of empty words which bear no real meaning.**” But, it is merely a principle which lends itself to discussion; it is not a true principle. What they discuss is not proper theory, but idle speculation.

O6 The element seeing.
P1 He reveals the nature and explains it by using the mundane “dust.”

Sutra:

“Ananda, the seeing awareness does not perceive by itself. It depends upon form and emptiness for its existence. You are

now in the Jeta Grove where you see brightness in the morning and darkness in the evening. Deep in the night you will see brightness when the moon arises and darkness when no moon is visible. The brightness and darkness are discerned by the seeing.

Commentary:

"Ananda, the seeing awareness does not perceive by itself." The seeing awareness has no knowing or feeling. There is no awareness in seeing by itself. Seeing is simply seeing. The element of seeing is just the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. The seeing awareness refers to this seeing essence which is clear, bright, and does not set up subject and object and so it basically is devoid of "perception" and "that which is perceived."

"It depends upon form and emptiness for its existence." It is because there is form and emptiness that there is perception. But it's not that seeing in its basic substance has perception; it is in the presence of form and emptiness that this distinction arises. **"You are now in the Jeta Grove –** you, Ananda, are now in the grove of Prince 'War Victory' – **where you see brightness in the morning and darkness in the evening. Deep in the night –** suppose you were there at midnight – **you will see brightness when the moon is visible.** On a night when the moon is not visible, it's dark. These two, **the brightness and darkness are discerned by the seeing."** How do we know light and dark? The seeing discriminates the light and dark. **"It depends upon form and emptiness for its existence."** It is because there is form and emptiness that there is perception. But, it's not that seeing in its basic substance is perception; it is in the presence of form and emptiness that this distinction arises.

P2 He explains the "dust" in detail.

Sutra:

"Is the seeing identical in substance with brightness, darkness, and emptiness, or are they not the same substance?

Are they the same and yet different, or are they not the same and yet not different?

Commentary:

"Is the seeing identical in substance with brightness, darkness, and emptiness, or are they not the same substance? Would you say that seeing and emptiness were one identical substance, or not? **Are they the same and yet different, or are they not the same and yet not different?** Perhaps they are identical and yet not identical; perhaps they are not the same and yet not different. Ananda, you explain it. Are seeing and emptiness one or two?

Sutra:

"Ananda, suppose seeing were one with brightness, darkness, and emptiness. It so happens that where there is darkness there is no brightness, and where there is brightness there is no darkness, because the two cancel each other out. If it were one with darkness, it would cease to exist in brightness; if it were one with brightness, it would cease to exist in darkness. Such being the case, how could it perceive both brightness and darkness? If brightness and darkness differ from each other, how can they form a unity with seeing, which transcends production and destruction?

Commentary:

The Buddha again calls out, **"Ananda, suppose seeing –** that which can see – **were one with brightness, darkness, and emptiness.** Suppose there were no distinctions between them. But, **it so happens that where there is darkness there is no brightness, and where there is brightness there is no darkness, because the two cancel each other out.** Light is not dark, and dark is not light. How can you say light and dark are the same substance? The natures of the two substances, light and dark, are destructive of each other: when it is dark, there is certainly no light; when there is light, there can't be any darkness. **If it were one with darkness –** if you say the seeing and the darkness are of one substance, one and

the same **– it would cease to exist in brightness.** The seeing which sees darkness would certainly be destroyed. **If it were one with brightness –** if you are determined to say that the seeing and the light are one and the same, of one substance **– it would cease to exist in darkness.** When there is darkness, your seeing should be destroyed. **Such being the case, how could it perceive both brightness and darkness?** If your seeing has disappeared, how can you say you see light and see darkness?

"If brightness and darkness differ from each other – suppose, instead, that they are of two kinds and not the same **– how can they form a unity with seeing, which transcends production and destruction?** Light and darkness are different, but the seeing is devoid of production and extinction. How can you say emptiness and light are the same substance as the seeing? How can natures which are different from one another be identical with something which is neither produced nor destroyed?"

Sutra:

"Suppose that the essence of seeing were not of one substance with brightness and darkness, and that you were separate from light, darkness, and emptiness. Then what shape and appearance would the source of the seeing have, as you distinguish it?

Commentary:

"**Suppose that the essence of seeing were not of one substance with brightness and darkness –** that it is not one with them **– and that you were separate from light, darkness, and emptiness –** you depart from light, darkness, and emptiness. **Then what shape and appearance would the source of the seeing have, as you distinguish it?** What is the seeing like? Does it have an appearance? Is it something you can see?"

Sutra:

"In the absence of darkness, brightness, and emptiness, the seeing would be the same as hair on a tortoise or horns on a

hare. How could we establish the seeing perception without the presence of the three qualities of brightness, darkness, and emptiness?

Commentary:

"**In the absence of darkness, brightness, and emptiness, the seeing would be the same as hair on a tortoise or horns on a hare.** It would be just that impossible. If you were separate from light, darkness, and emptiness, you would be unable to bring forth your seeing. **How could we establish the seeing perception without the presence of the three qualities of brightness, darkness, and emptiness?** If these three were not the same as your seeing, at what place would you establish your seeing?"

Sutra:

"How could we say that the seeing was one with darkness and brightness, since brightness and darkness are opposites? Yet, how can we say that it was different from the three qualities mentioned, since in their absence the seeing perception can never be established?

Commentary:

"How could we say that the seeing was one with darkness and brightness, since brightness and darkness are opposites? When there is light there is no darkness, and when there is darkness there is no light. They cannot coexist. You can see the darkness of your own shadow on one side of your body and light on the other side, but even then they cannot combine as one – they are mutually opposed. Since they are mutually opposed, how could you possibly say that they are the same? **Yet, how can we say that it was different from the three qualities mentioned, since in their absence the seeing perception can never be established?** If you were separate from light, darkness, and emptiness, there wouldn't be any seeing. How could you say it was different, and how could you say it was not different?"

Sutra:

"How could we say that the seeing was not one with emptiness, since no boundary is established between them when they are separated from each other? How could we say that they were not different, since the seeing always remains unchanged, regardless of whether it is perceiving brightness or perceiving darkness?

Commentary:

"**How could we say that the seeing was not one with emptiness, since no boundary is established between them when they are separated from each other?** There's no boundary. Can you say where the boundaries of seeing are and where the boundaries of emptiness are? There are no boundaries. If they were not the same, there would be boundaries between them. **How could we say that they were not different, since the seeing always remains unchanged, regardless of whether it is perceiving brightness or perceiving darkness?** You see light and you see dark, but the nature of seeing does not change. Why would you say they were not two?"

Sutra:

"You should examine this in even greater detail, investigate it minutely, consider and contemplate it carefully. The light comes from the sun and darkness from the absence of the moon; penetration belongs to emptiness, and solidity returns to the earth. From what does the essence of seeing arise?

Commentary:

"Ananda, **you should examine this in even greater detail** than before, **investigate it minutely,** with particular attention, **consider and contemplate it carefully. The light comes from the sun –** the appearance of light comes from the sun **– and darkness from the absence of the moon.** At night, when there is no moonlight, it is dark. **Penetration belongs to emptiness, and solidity returns to the earth.**" The places where there is no penetration – solid places

like walls and the earth – are obstructive in nature and impenetrable. "**From what does the essence of seeing arise?** But, look for the essence of your seeing which can see. From where does it come forth? You see if you can find it."

Sutra:

"Seeing has awareness, and emptiness is inanimate: they do not mix and unite. Nor can it be that the essence of seeing arises spontaneously without an origin.

Commentary:

"Seeing has awareness, and emptiness is inanimate." There is an awareness to seeing, whereas emptiness is dull, inanimate, and lacks awareness. One has awareness, one lacks it. **"They do not mix and unite."** They cannot join together. **"Nor can it be that the essence of seeing arises spontaneously without an origin."** But, it cannot be that the essence of seeing comes forth by itself and sees without any causes and conditions. There is no such principle.

P3 He puts them together and admonishes him to awaken.

Sutra:

"If the faculties of seeing, hearing, and knowing are by nature all pervasive and unmoving, you should know that the stable, boundless emptiness, together with the unstable elements such as earth, water, fire, and wind, are together known as the six elements. They are, in nature, true and perfectly fused and thus are the Treasury of the Thus Come One, fundamentally devoid of production and destruction.

Commentary:

"If the faculties of seeing, hearing, and knowing are by nature all pervasive and unmoving – the nature is perfectly fused and pervades the Dharma Realm – **you should know that the stable, boundless emptiness, together with the unstable elements such as earth, water, fire, and wind –** earth, water, fire, wind, emptiness, and seeing – **are together known as the six**

elements. They are, in nature, true and perfectly fused and thus are the Treasury of the Thus Come One.” They are a manifestation of the nature of the Thus Come One’s Treasury. **“Fundamentally devoid of production and destruction.”**

Sutra:

“Ananda, your nature is so submerged that you have not realized that your seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are basically the Treasury of the Thus Come One. You should contemplate seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing to see whether they are subject to production and extinction; whether they are identical or different; whether they are not subject to production and extinction; and whether they are not identical and not different.

Commentary:

At this point the Buddha reprimands Ananda again, **“Ananda, your nature is so submerged…** Ananda, your attitude is sunken and submerged. You don’t think about elevating yourself; you only think about lowering yourself.” As it says,

> *The refined person aims high.*
> *The petty person aims low.*

The Buddha scolds him, saying, “Your disposition isn’t at all resolute. You’re really wishy washy. You’re useless; there’s nothing that can be done for you.” When the Buddha says his nature is submerged, it’s just the same as telling him he’s gutless. He’s just like people who are fond of sleep – whenever there’s an opportunity, they go to sleep. That is also an indication of being submerged.

“...that you have not realized that your seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are basically the Treasury of the Thus Come One. You have not become enlightened. Your seeing, hearing, awareness and knowing are all the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

"Since you still don't understand, I will now give you an opportunity. **You should contemplate seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing –** take a look **– to see whether they are subject to production and extinction.** Are the essence of seeing, the nature of hearing, and the nature of awareness and knowing produced or extinguished? **Whether they are identical or different; whether they are not subject to production and extinction; and whether they are not identical and not different.** Distinguish this matter in detail."

P4 He concludes by showing the substance and function.

Sutra:

"You still don't know that in the Treasury of the Thus Come One the nature of seeing is enlightened brightness; the essence of enlightenment is bright seeing. Pure at its origin, it pervades the Dharma Realm.

Commentary:

"You still don't know that in the Treasury of the Thus Come One the nature of seeing is enlightened brightness." It is the brilliance of the substance of enlightenment. **"The essence of enlightenment is bright seeing.** The ultimate enlightenment that you obtain is the perception of brilliance. **Pure at its origin –** the fundamental nature is pure, and **– it pervades the Dharma Realm.**

Sutra:

"It accords with living beings' minds in response to their capacity to know. Consider, for example, the sense organ of seeing. Its seeing pervades the Dharma Realm. The same is true of the luster of the wonderful virtue of hearing, smelling, tasting, contact, and knowing. Since they fill emptiness in the ten directions throughout the Dharma Realm, how could there be any fixed location in which they are found?

Commentary:

"The seeing nature **accords with living beings' minds in response to their capacity to know. Consider, for example, the sense organ of seeing. Its seeing pervades the Dharma Realm. The same is true of the luster of the wonderful virtue of hearing, smelling, tasting, contact, and knowing.**" Their function is extremely subtle and wonderful, and their merit and virtue is inconceivable, with a luster like jade, glowing and translucent. **"Since they fill emptiness in the ten directions throughout the Dharma Realm –** it exists in the ten directions to the bounds of empty space **– how could there be any fixed location in which they are found?"** What fixed place could it have in addition? It is neither there nor not there. Because it doesn't have a place, there's no place that is not its place. It is a pervading substance with vast functioning.

P5 He rejects the two theories for being mere conjectures.

Sutra:

"It is experienced to whatever extent is dictated by the law of karma. Ignorant of this fact, people in the world are so deluded as to assign its origin to causes and conditions or to spontaneity. These mistakes, which arise from the discriminations and reasoning processes of the conscious mind, are nothing but the play of empty words which have no real meaning.

Commentary:

"It is experienced to whatever extent is dictated by the law of karma." According to living beings' karma, its function becomes apparent. **"Ignorant of this fact, people in the world –** ordinary people, those who study the provisional teaching, and adherents of external paths – **are so deluded as to assign its origin to causes and conditions,** or they may confusedly ascribe it to **spontaneity.** This method of thought arises **from the discriminations and reasoning processes of the conscious mind.** It is

nothing but the play of empty words which have no real meaning. The principles which they elicit are not actually true; they are not based on the primary truth. Nor are they the principle of Real Appearance which I am now explaining."

O7 The element consciousness.
P1 He reveals the organ and object.

Sutra:

"Ananda, the nature of consciousness has no source, but is a false manifestation based on the six organs and objects. Now, take a look at the entire holy assembly gathered here. As you glance at each one in turn, everything you see is like what is seen in a mirror, where nothing has any special distinction.

Commentary:

The earth, water, fire, wind, emptiness, and seeing already discussed are six elements. Now we add consciousness to make seven elements. What is "consciousness?" It is recognition or lack of it. What is recognized and what is not recognized? Nothing at all is recognized.

"Consciousness" is defined as intelligent comprehension. Intelligence is understanding, and comprehension is discerning.

Why did I say the consciousness doesn't recognize anything at all? What do you think you recognize? You say, "I recognize Mr. Smith, the third. I recognize Mr. Lee, the fourth. I recognize Mr. Wang, the fifth. Mr. Brown, the sixth." I say, "So what?" You say, "I recognize them, and they are my friends." It's just because you recognize them as your friends that they have dragged you away, and you recognize what is false as true. You recognize a false friend as your true friend. And you have forgotten your true friends. Mr. Smith is the third, Mr. Lee is the fourth, Mr. Wang is the fifth, and Mr. Brown is the sixth. There's nobody "the seventh," because basically this consciousness is the elder "seventh." So, the six elements discussed above and this seventh one, consciousness, are like seven siblings. But you've gone outside in recognition of your

friends and have forgotten your seven siblings. You don't recognize the earth, you don't recognize the water, you don't recognize fire, you don't recognize wind. That's four you don't recognize; and you don't recognize emptiness. Nor do you recognize seeing. Not only do you not recognize them, even Ananda didn't recognize them. So the Buddha, not fearing to take trouble, found them for him one by one. He found his seven siblings. These are your genuine flesh and blood relatives, your genuine companions of this Dharma-door. But you don't recognize them. You just keep hanging on to Smith the third, Lee the fourth, Wang the fifth, Brown the sixth, these possessive friends, and leave your real relatives abandoned at home. And, so I ask you what you recognize. You don't recognize anything. And what you don't recognize is all yours. You reject the inherent worth, the scenery of your homeland. But when you get outside, you cast off the root and grasp at the branches. You renounce what is close and seek what is distant. You go outside and get involved with people. Wouldn't you say this is upside-down? Why do you go outside and get involved with people and don't recognize your own flesh and blood relatives? Because you take what is false as true. You take a thief as your son. You recognize a thief as your friend and go outside to use your conscious mind to do things.

You say, "What I'm using right now is the conscious mind." Right. You're really smart. You're smarter than I am. I am now lecturing the Sutra, and I hadn't recognized this as the conscious mind. But now that you say that, I understand. So I'll say some more. In the Small Vehicle, when you take what is false as true and use the conscious mind, it can be harmful. Now you recognize the false and the true. You have found the seven siblings of your household, and so now, although the conscious mind is false, it has turned into the Treasury of the Thus Come One. It appears from within the Treasury of the Thus Come One. That is called "turning from appearances and returning to the nature." In the past you were attached entirely to appearances, but now you understand the self nature. Since you understand the self nature, you should no longer

renounce what is near to seek what is far, renounce the roots and grasp at the branches, or recognize a thief as your son. Then there is some hope for you. Then you have some wealth.

I have talked to you about reciting the Shurangama Mantra. If you are able to recite the Shurangama Mantra, you will be one of the world's wealthiest people for the next seven lives. In fact, right now, if you are able to recite the Shurangama Mantra, you are one of the world's wealthiest people, because you understand this Dharma Treasure. And, when you put this Dharma Treasure in your heart, tell me, who can steal it from you? Whatever kind of robber or thief there might be couldn't rob you of it. That Dharma Treasure is in your own self nature. It is deposited in the vault of your Thus Come One Treasury. And no one can find a way to go in there and steal it. How wonderful would you say that is? If you understand the Buddhadharma, then right now you are one of the world's wealthiest people. But for the time being you can't use your wealth. When you become a Buddha, then it will belong to you. Right now it's just in trust under your name, but you aren't of age yet, so for the time being you can't use it.

"Ananda, the nature of consciousness has no source" – it doesn't come from anywhere. To put it otherwise, it has no root.

"Well, then, what is it?" you wonder.

It is **"a false manifestation based on the six organs and objects."** In order to appear, it borrows the six organs of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, and the six objects of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas – the "seeing division" and the "appearance division."

"**Now, take a look at the entire holy assembly gathered here.** Ananda, look into this thoroughly, now. Contemplate those in this Shurangama Dharma Assembly who have certified to the fruition of sagehood. **As you glance at each one in turn –** look from one to the next in orderly sequence – **everything you see is like what is seen in a mirror, where nothing has any special distinction.** You look all around, and what you see is just like reflections in a

mirror." What special distinctions are there? The text here is discussing the function of the consciousness.

Sutra:

"However, your consciousness will identify them one by one: for example, Manjushri, Purna, Maudgalyayana, Subhuti, and Shariputra.

Commentary:

"However, Ananda, **your consciousness will identify them one by one.** Take a look at the multitude in this Dharma Assembly, and sequentially identify them. **For example, Manjushri,** the Bodhisattva Wonderfully Auspicious; **Purna –** this is Purnamaitreyaniputra, whose name means 'son of completeness and compassion.' This is **Maudgalyayana**, whose name means 'descendent of a family of bean gatherers.' This is **Subhuti**, whose name means 'born into emptiness.'" Why is Subhuti called "Born into Emptiness"? Because when he was born, all the treasures in the storehouses disappeared. That doesn't mean they were stolen by thieves. All the storehouses were very secure and locked tightly; but, the treasures inside were gone. So he was called "Born into Emptiness." After seven days had passed, all the treasures reappeared. So he is also called "Good Appearance." His father went to a diviner to have his son's horoscope read, and the reading was "both good and lucky." So he was also called "Auspicious and Good." Those were his three names.

"This is **Shariputra**." Who was Shariputra? He was the one who out debated his uncle while he was still in his mother's womb. His uncle was frightened by the thought of what his nephew would be like after he was born, and he felt that he would really lose face if he was defeated in debate by his nephew. So he went around India to study all kinds of theories, and he came back to debate with his nephew. But his nephew had already left the home life under the Buddha. The uncle wanted to steal his nephew back, so he challenged the Buddha to a debate. Who would have guessed that

he'd be defeated without winning a single round? He was beaten at his own game.

P2 Explains the organ and object.

Sutra:

"Does the discerning faculty of the conscious mind come from seeing, from forms, or from emptiness, or does it arise suddenly without a cause?

Commentary:

"Does the discerning faculty of the conscious mind..." The consciousness has a comprehending nature; it comprehends and discriminates all appearances. But from where does the basic substance of consciousness arise? Where does it come from? What is the mother of consciousness? "Does it **come from seeing?**" Is seeing the mother of consciousness? Is the ability to see the mother of consciousness? "Does it arise **from forms?**" Are things with form and appearance the mother of consciousness? "Does it arise **from emptiness?**" Or is empty space the mother of consciousness? Ultimately, what is its mother? **"Or does it arise suddenly without a cause?"** Or is it born suddenly, without a mother? Are there things in the world which suddenly come into being without a mother? Where does the consciousness come from?

Sutra:

"Ananda, suppose your consciousness came from seeing. If there were no brightness, darkness, form, and emptiness – if these four did not exist you could not see. With seeing non existent, what would be the origin of your consciousness?

Commentary:

"Ananda, suppose your consciousness came from seeing. Suppose the nature of the substance of your consciousness was born from seeing. **If there were no brightness, darkness –** if the two appearances of light and darkness did not exist – **form, and emptiness –** if nothing existed that had a nature which is visible,

and if there were no emptiness **– if these four did not exist –** if these four causes and conditions did not exist **– you could not see –** your seeing would not exist, either. Without light, darkness, form, or emptiness, you wouldn't have any seeing.

"With seeing non existent, what would be the origin of your consciousness?" If the mother does not exist, how can the child be born? So, the consciousness does not arise from seeing.

Sutra:

"If your consciousness arose from form rather than from seeing, it would not see either in brightness or in darkness. In the absence of brightness and darkness, it would not see form or emptiness, either. In the absence of form, where would your consciousness come from?

Commentary:

"If your consciousness arose from form rather than from seeing…" It has just been established that consciousness is not born from seeing. Perhaps, then, you say that it arises from appearances. **"In the absence of brightness and darkness –** if it does not come from seeing, it cannot see light or darkness. Therefore, **it does not see form or emptiness, either."** If it can't see light or darkness, how can it see form, appearances, or emptiness? **"In the absence of form, where would your consciousness come from?"** If there are no appearances to be its mother, where does the child called consciousness come from? Tell me.

Sutra:

"If it came from emptiness, it is neither an appearance nor the seeing. Since it does not see, it is unable by itself to discern brightness, darkness, form, or emptiness. Since it is not an appearance, it is in itself devoid of external conditions. Therefore, there is no place for seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing to be established.

Commentary:

"If it came from emptiness – you may say that the mother of consciousness is simply emptiness. In that case, **it is neither an appearance nor the seeing."** There isn't any appearance, and there isn't any seeing. **"Since it does not see, it is unable by itself to discern brightness, darkness, form, or emptiness."** Without any discriminations, it cannot know them at all. **"Since it is not an appearance, it is in itself devoid of external conditions."** If there are no appearances, conditions are also extinguished. There are no conditions at all, **"Therefore, there is no place for seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing to be established."** And since there is no seeing, hearing, awareness, or knowing, the situation is just as already explained: without the mother there's no way the child can be born.

Sutra:

"Since its location is devoid of these two, the consciousness that arises from emptiness would be the same as non existent. Even if it did exist, it would not be the same as a thing. Even if your consciousness came forth from it, how would it discern anything?

Commentary:

"**Since its location is devoid of these two, the consciousness that arises from emptiness would be the same as non existent."** If you propose that it comes from emptiness, it would be devoid of the ability to see or of an appearance of its own. So if it is from emptiness, it is the same as non existent. It's incorrect to be on the side of existence, and incorrect to be on the side of emptiness. If you can see it, no consciousness is born from it. If you can't see it – if you don't see anything at all, how can there be consciousness?" If it were to arise from emptiness, it would not exist, and if it doesn't exist, how can a consciousness come forth from it? **"Even if it did exist, it would not be the same as a thing."** You may say that it exists, that it is produced from something that exists, but it's not like a physical object. You can't see it. So what is it? **"Even if**

your consciousness came forth from it – supposing that your consciousness arises from emptiness – **how would it discern anything?"** How would your consciousness make discriminations? Tell me.

Sutra:

"If it suddenly comes forth without a cause, why can't you discern the moonlight within the sunlight?

Commentary:

"You say, 'Ah, the consciousness suddenly appears.' **If it suddenly comes forth without a cause,** without any reason at all, **why can't you discern the moonlight within the sunlight?** Can you see the bright moon when the sun is out? Why can't the bright moon suddenly appear? Since it can't, your consciousness can't perceive the moon in the sunlight. So, it is a mistake for you to say that it can suddenly appear. That's also incorrect."

The Buddha is being unreasonable. Basically, there's no such principle, but he establishes it and asks Ananda about it and causes Ananda not to know what's right.

Sutra:

"You should investigate this even more carefully, discriminate it in detail, and look into it. The seeing belongs to your eyes; the appearances are considered to be the environment; what has an appearance is existent; what is without any appearance is non existent. What, then, are the conditions that cause the consciousness to come into being?

Commentary:

"Ananda, now **you should investigate this even more carefully, discriminate it in detail, and look into it.** At the point where the most minute and subtle distinctions can be made, you should investigate it in even more detail and look into it. **The seeing belongs to your eyes.** Seeing originates from your eyes. **The appearances are considered to be the environment.** What has form and appearance is the defiling environment before your

eyes. **What is without any appearance is non existent.** What doesn't have form or appearance is said to be non existent. **What, then, are the conditions that cause the consciousness to come into being?"** Where does it come from?

P3 He makes him aware of how to put them together and return them.

Sutra:

"The consciousness moves and the seeing is quiet; they do not mix and unite. Smelling, hearing, awareness, and knowing are the same way. Nor should it be that the condition of consciousness exists spontaneously without an origin.

Commentary:

"The consciousness moves and the seeing is quiet." The consciousness makes discriminations, and its nature in its substance is one of animation. The nature of "the seeing is quiet," it is unmoving. **"They do not mix and unite.** So, you say they can combine, but they can't. **Smelling, hearing, awareness, and knowing are the same way."** The nature of smelling, the awareness of hearing, and the nature that knows and is aware are the same: they do not mix and unite. **"Nor should it be that the condition of consciousness exists spontaneously without an origin."** Although the state of consciousness does not mix and unite, it should not be that the conditions of consciousness come forth without an origin. The same principle applies again: without a mother, how can the child be born?

Sutra:

"If this conscious mind does not come from anywhere, you should know that the same is true of the mind, which makes distinctions, and the seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing, which are all complete and tranquil. Their nature is without an origin. They and emptiness, earth, water, fire, and wind are together called the seven elements. Their true natures are perfectly fused, and all are the Treasury of the Thus Come One, fundamentally devoid of production and extinction.

Commentary:

"If this conscious mind – if the conscious mind which makes distinctions **– does not come from anywhere –** if there is basically nowhere that it comes from – **you should know that the same is true of the mind, which makes distinctions, and the seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing –** the awareness of seeing, the awareness of hearing, the awareness of smelling, the awareness of tasting, and the awareness of knowing – **are all complete and tranquil.** All are perfect, still, and very pure. **Their nature is without an origin."** There is nowhere that their nature comes from and nowhere that it is going to.

"They and emptiness, earth, water, fire, and wind are together called the seven elements. Their true natures are perfectly fused, and boundless. **And all are the Treasury of the Thus Come One.** They arise from the Treasury of the Thus Come One, and are **fundamentally devoid of production and extinction."** That's why they are not born or destroyed.

Sutra:

"Ananda, your mind is coarse and shallow, and so you do not realize that the seeing and hearing are the Treasury of the Thus Come One, and you do not discover that knowing is the same way. You should contemplate these six locations of consciousness: are they the same or different? Are they empty or existent? Are they neither the same nor different? Are they neither empty nor existent?

Commentary:

"Ananda, your mind is coarse and shallow." The Buddha admonishes Ananda again. "Your thoughts are too coarse, too superficial." Coarse means "not subtle," heedless. It means he doesn't stop and think or look into things. He doesn't investigate things. He's too impulsive and reckless and slapdash when he does things. The word "shallow" refers to his mind – the mind which is the opposite of his deep mind. Later Ananda says, "I offer this deep thought to those who are as countless as the motes of dust of the

Buddhalands, to repay the kindness shown me by the Buddha." But, now his mind is shallow; it's not his deep mind. It means he is not paying close attention to what is going on.

"And so you do not realize that the seeing and hearing – and smelling, tasting, awareness, and knowing, their nature and capabilities – **are the Treasury of the Thus Come One."** You don't understand the principles the Buddha explained about earth, water, fire, wind, emptiness, and seeing. "**And you do not discover that knowing is the same way,** also part of the Thus Come One's Treasury. You don't comprehend that they are all functions of The Treasury of the Thus Come One."

"You should contemplate these six locations of consciousness." The six places of the conscious mind are earth, water, fire, wind, emptiness, and seeing. Are these six aspects of the conscious mind **the same or different? Are they empty or existent? Are they neither the same nor different?** Are they not the same and yet not different? **Are they neither empty nor existent?** Or are they not empty and yet not existent? What would you say these six consciousnesses are like?"

P4 He concludes by showing the function of the nature.

Sutra:

"You basically do not know that in the Treasury of the Thus Come One the nature of consciousness is bright and knowing. Enlightened brightness is the true consciousness. The wonderful enlightenment is tranquil and pervades the Dharma Realm.

Commentary:

"Ananda, **you basically do not know that in the Treasury of the Thus Come One the nature of consciousness is bright and knowing.**" The consciousness of the nature is bright light; it is enlightened. **"Enlightened brightness is the true consciousness."** This enlightenment and light is the genuine consciousness. "The wonderful enlightenment is tranquil. The inconceivable substance

of enlightenment is tranquil and pure and **pervades the Dharma Realm.**”

Sutra:

“It encompasses the emptiness of the ten directions and issues forth in it. How can it have a location?

Commentary:

“The consciousness **encompasses the emptiness of the ten directions and issues forth in it.**” “Encompasses” means it contains the emptiness; “issues forth” means it flows forth in emptiness. Containing and flowing forth in the emptiness of the ten directions, the consciousness is everywhere. **“How can it have a location?”** How can it be in a certain direction or have a certain location?

P5 He rejects both as being mere conjectures.

Sutra:

“It is experienced to whatever extent is dictated by the law of karma. Ignorant of this fact, people in the world are so deluded as to assign its origin to causes and conditions or to spontaneity. These mistakes, which arise from the discriminations and reasoning processes of the conscious mind, are nothing but the play of empty words which have no real meaning.”

Commentary:

“It is experienced to whatever extent is dictated by the law of karma.” In accordance with the karmic response of living beings, these various retributions arise. **“Ignorant of this fact, people in the world” –** adherents to external paths, of the provisional vehicles, and of the Small Vehicles, and ordinary people, those who have no wisdom – **“are so deluded as to assign its origin to causes and conditions.”** They wonder if this doctrine is part of the doctrine of causes and conditions. They are confused and doubtful and don’t recognize it clearly. Or, they ascribe it **“to**

spontaneity," the doctrine discussed by adherents of the naturalism of some external ways.

"These mistakes, which arise from the discriminations and reasoning processes of the conscious mind" – this is entirely the conscious mind making discriminations and calculations – functioning on that level **– "are nothing but the play of empty words which have no real meaning."**

CHAPTER 7

Ananda Gives Rise to Faith

H2 Ananda understands his mind and gives rise to faith.
I1 Based on the instructions they become enlightened.
J1 Description of how they awakened, based on the teaching.

Sutra:

At that time, Ananda and the Great Assembly, filled with the subtle, wonderful instruction of the Buddha, the Thus Come One, were peaceful in body and mind and were without obstructions. Everyone in the Great Assembly became aware that his or her mind pervaded the ten directions, beholding emptiness in the ten directions as one might look at a leaf or at an object held in one's hands.

Commentary:

At that time, after the discussion of the seven elements, **Ananda and the Great Assembly,** the great Arhats, the holy assembly devoid of outflows, the great Bhikshu Sangha, and the rest – were **filled with the subtle, wonderful instruction of the Buddha, the Thus Come One.** This most subtle and wonderful state, this most inconceivable doctrine, this Dharma, was the instruction given to the Great Assembly. The members of the Great Assembly, having obtained the World Honored One 's subtle, wonderful instruction, **were peaceful in body and mind.**

“Peaceful” means that, basically, there wasn’t anything at all. Everything was empty; the dust had been washed away with water, and all that was left now was the light of the Buddhanature. This is to be peaceful; there isn’t anything at all. Everything is empty. Inside there is no body or mind. Outside there is no world. When one attains this state, there isn’t anything at all.

Why aren’t we peaceful? Because within we are still attached to our bodies. If someone says one sentence about us, we become afflicted. Whenever anyone is the least bit rude to us, we can’t put it down. We are not at peace.

And they **were without obstructions.** Because they were peaceful, they were free of obstructions; they were not hindered by their bodies or their minds.

Inside there is no body and mind.
Outside there is no world.

Therefore, there is no obstruction. Why are you obstructed? One of my disciples is always wondering if she’s going to get a letter from her boyfriend, or else she is busy writing to him. That’s an obstruction. Why is she that way? Because she is not at peace in body and mind. She is hindered, so she can’t put it down. If you are without obstruction... What benefit is there in hanging on to him, anyway? You think of him everyday until your hair turns white and your eyes blur and you get very old. There’s no benefit in it.

By this time, I’m no longer hindered by anything. In the past, when I was building temples in Hong Kong, my hair turned white, but now it’s turned black again. Since I’m not obstructed by anything, I lecture Sutras for you now, and it’s simply lecturing. When I finish, I don’t place any special meaning on it. I’m not attached. If some difficult problem arises, I think of a way to work it out at the time, and once it’s resolved I don’t worry about it. I forget about it, not intentionally, but naturally. Why? Because if you look upon everything as really important, you won’t be able to

put it down. If you look upon everything as being no problem, as being very ordinary, then there's nothing going on at all.

If Mount T'ai fell down before you,
You wouldn't be surprised.

That means that no matter what great calamity should occur, even if your house should fall in, you pay no attention. If you pay no attention, then even if it does fall down, it won't harm you. Why do things harm you? It's because you can't put them down. You are hindered by them. You get scared, and so you get hurt. If you aren't afraid, if you have your wits about you, then it doesn't matter where you are.

Everyone in the Great Assembly became aware. Everyone knew. I don't know whether everyone in the present great assembly is aware. **That his or her mind pervaded the ten directions.** Their minds filled up the Dharma Realm in all the ten directions. **Beholding emptiness in the ten directions.** Do you see the emptiness of the ten directions? What is it like? The emptiness of the ten directions is definitely not big. How big is it? One can see it **as one might look at a leaf or at an object held in one's hands.** Seeing it is like looking at the palm of your hand. "Leaf," the commentary says, refers here to a page of Buddhist scripture, but that is not necessarily the case. It might be the leaf of a tree, the leaf of a flower, or any kind of leaf at all. It's an analogy, so it's basically not real to begin with. "Object" is said in the commentary to refer to the Amala fruit, which exists in India but not in China. In general, the members of the Great Dharma Assembly awakened at that time to the principle that the emptiness throughout the ten directions and the entire experience was in their own minds. It was not beyond a single thought of the mind. So, the mind dharma is wonderful. To the ends of empty space, throughout the Dharma Realm, there is no place that the mind does not reach. Since the mind is that big, the great is compressed into the small. You can see the emptiness of the ten directions as clearly as you can see something held in the palm of your own hand. Why is this? I'll tell

you: at that time the members of the Dharma Assembly have all obtained the penetration of the heavenly eye. They have all obtained the wisdom eye. Therefore, they can perceive this state; they can perceive that the myriad dharmas are only the mind and that the mind contains the myriad dharmas. The mind contains the true and the false.

What is it that holds both the true and the false? It is our true mind. Our true mind contains the true and false and is without a location. It exhausts empty space and pervades the Dharma Realm. So, where is it? It is neither there nor not there. Thus, the mind contains the myriad dharmas, and the myriad dharmas are just the mind.

All dharmas arise from the mind;
All dharmas are extinguished by the mind.
When the mind arises, all dharmas arise;
When the mind is extinguished,
all dharmas are extinguished.

Thus, the true mind is neither produced nor destroyed, and dharmas are also neither produced nor destroyed. So you see, everyone in that Great Dharma Assembly became enlightened. If we haven't become enlightened, having heard the Sutra up to this point, shouldn't we be ashamed? I'm not joking with you. People must get enlightened now! Whoever doesn't get enlightened will be beaten! I'm going to force you into it!

Sutra:

All the things that exist in the world were the wonderfully bright inherent mind of Bodhi.

Commentary:

At that time, the members of the Great Dharma Assembly were aware of the emptiness in the ten directions as if it were a leaf or an object held in their hands. And they also were aware that **all the**

things that exist in the world were the wonderfully bright inherent mind of Bodhi. All are things in the Bodhi mind.

Sutra:

The essence of the mind was completely pervading and contained the ten directions.

Commentary:

The mind is the Bodhi mind. **The essence** of the mind was **completely pervading.** The subtle, wonderful principle of the Bodhi mind is completely pervading. There is no place it is not complete. It is without the slightest deficiency, so it is said to be completely pervading. If there's too much, it cannot be said to be complete; if there's too little, it is not complete, either. There's just as much as there should be. Thus, according to living beings' minds there is a response in the right amount. That is to be completely pervading.

And contained the ten directions. "The ten directions" is just a figure of speech. Basically, it's not just ten directions; it pervades all places.

Sutra:

Then they looked back upon their bodies born of their parents as a fine mote of dust blown about in the emptiness of the ten directions; sometimes visible, sometimes not, as a single bubble floating on the clear, vast sea, appearing from nowhere and disappearing into oblivion. They comprehended and knew for themselves, and obtained their fundamental wonderful mind, which is everlasting and cannot be extinguished.

Commentary:

Then they looked back: before, they had looked out, and they hadn't been able to see their own eyes. But, now they looked back and probably could see their own eyes. The Buddha said that one's seeing cannot see one's own face; so how is it that they can now see their own eyes? They have opened the heavenly eye. With the

heavenly eye you can see not only outside, but inside. When you look at your body, it is like a crystal container.

You look in this crystal container and can see what color your blood is. When you obtain the penetration of the heavenly eye, the wisdom eye, and the Buddha eye, you can see what is in every part of your body. You can see what sickness there is, the places where the blood and energy don't flow well. You can see inside and outside. At that time the members of the Great Assembly looked upon the ten directions as upon something held in the palms of their hands, and they also saw their own stomachs. They saw the insides of their own bodies. Their bodies were the same size as the emptiness of the ten directions.

"Then why," you may ask, "does it say that the body, born of one's parents, is like a fine mote of dust?"

The body that is just as big as the emptiness of the ten directions is the Dharma body. The flesh body is the retribution body, which is like one fine mote of dust in the emptiness of the ten directions. Wouldn't you say that this is as small as you can get? Thus, the Sutra says that **they looked back upon their bodies born of their parents,** the unclean body given them by their parents, **as a fine mote of dust blown about in the emptiness of the ten directions; sometimes visible, sometimes not;** as if suddenly there, suddenly gone, like a lamp about to go out but not yet gone; not yet gone, but having only a little light left. The body born of production and subject to extinction eventually will cease to be. Although it's here now, it will certainly be gone in the future. So, the body is as if there, as if gone. This body is extremely perishable. So don't be so turned around by it, so attached to this very impure body which was born of your parents. Don't be so greedily fond of your body, so unable to put it down. You look upon this body as extremely valuable, when actually it's really useless. Not to be able to put down your own body is the greatest kind of waste.

Each member of the Great Assembly saw his body **as a single bubble floating on the clear, vast sea,** as a little bubble bobbing on

a very pure, great sea, **appearing from nowhere and disappearing into oblivion.** It can't arise and isn't extinguished. Where does it come from? Where does it go to? It is without an origin. **They comprehended and knew for themselves –** each person fully comprehended and was completely aware, and they all **obtained their fundamental wonderful mind,** they all attained their fundamentally inherent, wonderfully bright mind, **which is everlasting and cannot be extinguished.** It is neither produced nor destroyed.

I2 He gratefully praises the benefit he has received.
J1 First he gratefully praises the Buddhadharma.

Sutra:

They bowed to the Buddha and placed their palms together, having obtained what they had never had before. Then, facing the Thus Come One, Ananda spoke verses in praise of the Buddha.

Commentary:

All the people in the world like to have people praise them and say they are good. There's nothing strange about that. People in the world who like fame hear someone say, "You're the best. You're number one," and they hold on to that "number one" and are incredibly happy. Now the Buddha's disciples also praise the Buddha. **They bowed to the Buddha and placed their palms together, having obtained what they had never had before.**

Then, facing the Thus Come One, before the Buddha, **Ananda spoke verses in praise of the Buddha.** Here Ananda reveals his literary prowess again. It's been so long since he's been able to display his erudition that he now wants to speak some lines of verse in praise of the Buddha.

Sutra:

"The wonderfully deep Dharani,
The unmoving Honored One,

The Foremost Shurangama King
Is seldom found in the world.

Commentary:

These first two lines of the verse that Ananda composed on the strength of his excellent scholarship and erudition praise the Buddha. The verse praises the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. The words, **"The wonderfully deep Dharani, the unmoving Honored One,"** praise the Buddha. "Wonderfully deep" praises the Buddha's Dharma body, which pervades all places. The word "Dharani" praises the Buddha's reward body, which is like a dharani. "Dharani" is a Sanskrit word which means "to unite and maintain" – to unite all dharmas and maintain all meanings. The Buddha's reward body is perfect, and thus it is considered to be a dharani.

The word "unmoving" praises the Buddha's response bodies. The Buddha manifests whatever kind of body is needed to take people across by speaking Dharma for them. That is, the Buddha manifests the body of a Buddha to teach, transform, and save living beings who should be taken across by the body of the Buddha. If they should be taken across by the body of a Pratyekabuddha, the Buddha will manifest the body of a Pratyekabuddha and take them across. If their causes and conditions are such that they should be taken across by the body of a great elder, the Buddha manifests the body of a great elder to teach and transform them. Yet, though the Buddha manifests many response bodies, their basic substance is "unmoving." They don't move from the Bodhimanda, yet they teach and transform living beings. Finally, the words "Honored One" are the name of the Buddha. The Buddha is called the World Honored One .

"The Foremost Shurangama King is seldom found in the world." The words "Foremost Shurangama King" praise the Dharma, which is "seldom found in the world." The Buddha and the Dharma are rare, indeed. The Buddha is rare in the world, and the Dharma is rare in the world. "Foremost" means first.

Ultimately, what is first? The Shurangama King is first. It is the ultimately durable King of Samadhis, the Great Shurangama Samadhi. The Shurangama Samadhi is the Dharma king among samadhis. It is seldom found in the world; in fact, there is no other like it in the world – in the sentient world or the material world.

J2 He awakens to obtaining the dharma body.

Sutra:

> ***"It melts away my upside down thoughts***
> ***Gathered in a million kalpas.***
> ***So I needn't endure asamkhyeya aeons***
> ***To obtain the dharma body.***

Commentary:

"It melts away," gets rid of, my false **"upside down thoughts gathered in a million kalpas."** One kalpa is 139,600 years. A thousand times 139,600 years is counted as one small kalpa. Twenty small kalpas are reckoned as a middle sized kalpa. Four middle sized kalpas are a great kalpa. The million kalpas referred to here represent an unknowable amount of time, from time without beginning to the present. The upside down thoughts that are melted away didn't begin to arise today or yesterday. They came from limitless, limitless kalpas ago, accumulated little by little. They are habitual. Habits are the basic substance of upside down thoughts. Habits make upside down thoughts grow. "Upside down" means that they take what is true as false and what is false as true. They take what is black as white and what is white as black. You tell them that something is white and they say it's black. They turn things upside-down. If people think one way, the upside down person will certainly think another way. He always wants to have a special style.

"So I needn't endure asamkhyeya aeons to obtain the dharma body." "Asamkhyeya" is a Sanskrit word which means "immeasurable." Three great asamkhyeya aeons are required for the cultivation and accomplishment of Buddhahood. To go from

initial resolve to the first ground of a Bodhisattva takes one asamkhyeya aeon. The passage from the first ground through the seventh ground also takes one asamkhyeya aeon. The passage from the eighth ground to Wonderful Enlightenment, the accomplishment of Buddhahood, takes a third asamkhyeya aeon. How long a time is three immeasurable aeons? That number is a big number.

Ananda heard the subtle, wonderful Dharma-door that the Buddha was expressing, and it enabled him to become enlightened. Since he had become enlightened, he didn't have to pass through such a long time as three great asamkhyeya aeons before he obtained the Dharma body.

But the "obtaining" referred to here is not certification. It is awakening to the principle of the Dharma body. He must cultivate further before he can be certified as having actually obtained the Dharma body. He has to progress in the development of his skill. He knows that he need not pass through such a long time as three great asamkhyeya aeons before becoming a Buddha. He knows that he understands the pure nature and bright substance of the everlasting true mind. He knows that he himself and all external forms and appearances are the wonderful bright mind of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. Since he understands this, he knows he will very quickly accomplish Buddhahood.

I3 He brings forth a vast, great mind.
J1 First he vows to repay kindness.

Sutra:

"I wish now to achieve the result
And become an honored king,
Who then returns to save as many beings
As there are sand grains in the Ganges.
I offer this deep thought to those who are
As countless as the motes of dust of the Buddhalands,
To repay the kindness shown me by the Buddha.

Commentary:

"I wish now to achieve the result and become an honored king." Who is the "Honored King?" The Honored King is the Buddha. What is the "result?" The result is Buddhahood. He wishes to become a Buddha **"who then returns to save as many beings as there are sand grains in the Ganges."** These two lines contain the Four Vast Vows.

"I wish now to achieve the result and become an Honored King" includes two vows:

Dharma doors are limitless;
I vow to study them all.

and,

The Buddha Way is unsurpassed;
I vow to accomplish it.

"And then return to save as many beings as there are sand grains in the Ganges" includes the vows:

Living beings are boundless;
I vow to take them across.

and,

Afflictions are endless;
I vow to cut them off.

If you are to save living beings, you first have to cut off your afflictions. If you don't cut off your afflictions, then you not only fail to take living beings across, but you are taken across by them. Why? Each living being has its own nature – each is different. Some are stubborn. You say something to them and they are extremely obstinate. No matter what Dharma you speak for them, they don't listen. Basically, you should be able to take them across, but they don't listen to your teaching; and at that time, you will give

rise to affliction, if you haven't already cut off afflictions. "Oh, you're obstinate? Well, I'll be even more obstinate than you!" When afflictions arise, you cannot teach and transform living beings. That's what's meant by being taken across by living beings instead of taking them across.

If you want to take living beings across, you have to cut off the afflictions. You have to look upon living beings as children. You should not blame living beings with evil natures for being the way they are. And, of course, you should gather in and receive all living beings who have good natures. When you teach, you definitely have to cut off your afflictions.

So, first you wish to obtain the fruition of Buddhahood and accomplish the Buddha's way, and then you wish to return and save all beings. **"I offer this deep thought to those who are as countless as the motes of dust of the Buddhalands."** I now offer my deep mind, not a shallow mind, but a mind which brings forth the resolve of a Bodhisattva of the Great Vehicle, to the Buddhas and to living beings as numerous as the motes of dust in the Buddhalands. I offer my deep mind to living beings so that their wishes can be fulfilled and all that they seek can be obtained. I don't make offerings only to Buddhas, and not to living beings, because living beings are simply Buddhas.

"If living beings are simply Buddhas," you wonder, "then why bother to cultivate?"

That's just like a certain person who says, "We are all Buddhas!" Right, you're a Buddha, but you have to cultivate before you become a Buddha. If you don't cultivate, but just keep saying from morning to night, "I'm a Buddha, I'm a Buddha, I'm a Buddha," it is of no use at all. You have to have true skill for it to count.

So to the person who claimed, "We are all Buddhas," I said, "You're a Buddha? The Buddha has three bodies, four kinds of wisdom, five eyes, and six spiritual penetrations. How many bodies

do you have? How many kinds of wisdom?. How many eyes do you have? How many penetrations? You can't fake it."

"I offer up this deep thought to those who are countless as the motes of dust of the Buddhalands" in order to **"repay the kindness shown me by the Buddha."** This is my opportunity to repay the Buddha's kindness, and to show that I am grateful to the Buddha.

J2 He resolves to save living beings.

Sutra:

"In obeisance I ask the World Honored One to certify my vow to first enter the five turbid evil realms.

"If there is even one being who hasn't become a Buddha, at death I will not reach for Nirvana.

Commentary:

"Obeisance" means placing the five limbs on the ground in prostration. **"I ask" –** he requests **– "the World Honored One to certify"** me. He wanted to offer his deep thought to beings as countless as the motes of dust in the Buddhalands in order to repay the Buddha's kindness. But, if he had merely said it himself and no one had acted as certifier, it wouldn't have counted. Someone definitely had to certify him. Therefore, he asked the Buddha to be his certifier, so that in the future he would certainly be able to carry out his intention. He wanted the Buddha to certify his **"vow to first enter the five turbid evil realms."**

When the human life span reaches 200,000... "When will that happen?" you ask incredulously.

If you don't believe there can be a time when people live to be 200,000, you should walk into the time when there is a lifespan of 200,000 years and take a look. Then you'll know for sure that there are people who live to be 200,000 years old. When the time comes that people have 200,000 year life spans, the human life span begins to decrease by one year every hundred years, and the average body height decreases by one inch every hundred years.

When the life span has decreased to a length of 200 years, that is the beginning of the period of the five turbid evil realms. Before the defiled and unclean time of the five turbidities, the world is very pure, just as Wu T'ai Mountain is now called the "clean, cool world." In the future the world will continue to change, and after several thousand years, Wu T'ai Mountain may not be called clean and cool, it may be called the hot, noisy world – it's not for sure.

What are the five turbidities? The first is the turbidity of the kalpa. Kalpa is a Sanskrit word that is interpreted as a "division of time." How does the kalpa become turbid? At the time of the five turbid evil realms, the evil karma of living beings makes the kalpa turbid.

The second turbidity is views. In the past, people saw everything as clean. But when the turbid kalpa arrives, people see things as unclean. The turbidity of views is composed of the five quick servants: a view of the body, prejudiced views, views of prohibitions, views of views, and deviant views.

The view of a body: all living beings are attached to having bodies. They love their bodies. "I certainly have to take care of myself. I can't let anything happen to me." They look upon their own bodies as extremely important. They want to wear good clothes, eat good food, live in a good place. They always look upon their bodies as priceless gems. Right, your body is a priceless gem, but if you misuse it, your priceless gem turns into something not even as good as excrement. Why? Because you tend only to its superficial aspects, and don't discover the true gem of your self nature. So all you know is that your body is yours and you can't put it down. From morning to night you are busy on behalf of your body. That's the view of a body.

Prejudiced views favor one side or the other. If you don't favor emptiness, then you favor existence. In general, it means not being in accord with the Middle Way.

The third "quick servant" is the view of prohibitions. Precepts can turn into something bad when they are based on mistaking for

a cause something that is not a cause. Such a mistake leads to the cultivation of non-beneficial ascetic practices. I explained earlier how some people imitate the habits of cows or dogs, or sleep on beds of nails, or undertake other non-beneficial ascetic practices. People who do this have a view of prohibitions. "See me!" they think, "I hold precepts. None of you can do what I do; you can't compare to me." They always have this arrogance in their minds.

The fourth is the "view of views," or grasping at views. This is to mistake for an effect something that is not an effect. People with this problem think they have obtained effects which they have not obtained.

The fifth is deviant views. People with deviant knowledge and views are always thinking about things in an improper way. These are the five quick servants, which comprise the turbidity of views.

The third turbidity is the turbidity of afflictions, which is composed of the five slow servants: greed, hatred, stupidity, pride, and doubt. "Greed" refers to an insatiable greed for pleasant experiences. You are greedy for the things you like. "Hatred" is the dislike of unpleasant situations. "Stupidity" means stupid false thoughts. "Pride" refers to arrogance and self satisfaction – the feeling that "I am the greatest" and "no one is equal to me." Arrogant people have no courtesy toward others.

"Doubt" refers to doubt of the genuine Dharma and a preference for improper dharmas instead. Such people doubt the true and rely on the false. They doubt the proper Dharma and believe deviant dharmas.

These are the five slow servants, which comprise the third turbidity, that of afflictions. The existence of these five dull servants creates a lot of affliction.

The fourth turbidity is that of living beings. Living beings – let's not even try to express it. Why? Living beings are just too filthy, too unclean, too impure. You shouldn't think of yourself as being so terrific. Living beings are murky and turbid; there's nothing so good about them. But living beings think of themselves

as something really special, despite the fact that they comprise the fourth kind of turbidity.

The fifth turbidity is the turbidity of a lifespan. Our mundane lives, our destinies, are impure.

Ananda vows to first enter the five turbid evil realms to teach and transform living beings. Shakyamuni Buddha went into the five turbid evil realms to teach and transform living beings, and his disciple, Ananda, probably wanted to emulate his teacher's great, awesome energy and do the same. He was not afraid that the five turbid evil realms were defiling, and he came anyway to teach living beings.

"If there is even one being who hasn't become a Buddha, at death I will not reach for Nirvana." If there is just one living being who hasn't become a Buddha, I won't become a Buddha, either. I won't be certified as having attained the fruition; I won't enter Nirvana. This is like the vow Earth Treasury Bodhisattva made:

When all living beings are saved,
I will accomplish Bodhi.
As long as the hells aren't empty,
I vow not to become a Buddha.

Earth Treasury Bodhisattva is in the hells with the hungry ghosts. He says that as long as the hells aren't empty, he won't become a Buddha. He will definitely wait. When will the hells be empty? Don't worry about him. They'll be empty when they're empty. Before they are empty, no matter how much you worry, Earth Treasury Bodhisattva won't become a Buddha. He will wait.

J3 He seeks to cast out his subtle doubts.

Sutra:

"May the exalted hero's awesome strength,
His kindness and compassion,

Search out and dispel even the most subtle
Of my doubts.

Commentary:

"May the exalted hero's awesome strength, his kindness and compassion…" The great hall, the main Buddha hall, is called the "Jeweled Hall of the Great Heroes." A great hero can break all living beings' subtle delusions, confusion, and ignorance. The great hero can break up living beings' fundamental ignorance, severing it at its origin.

With "awesome strength," the great hero can pull all living beings out of affliction, which originates in ignorance.

"Kindness and compassion!" This is an impartial kindness which is granted even to those with whom one has no conditions. It is universal kindness. With equal kindness toward all living beings, the Buddhas bestow bliss upon everyone. With the great compassion of being of one substance with all, they pull living beings out of every kind of suffering and bestow upon them ultimate bliss. They enable living beings to understand their original face. That's what is called,

Great kindness toward those with whom
one has no conditions.
Great compassion toward those who are
of the same substance.

Bodhisattvas take across those with whom they have conditions. Buddhas have the compassion to save those with whom they have no conditions. Bodhisattvas say, "I'll rescue all those who have affinities with me." They are selective. Buddhas are not selective; they save all living beings, whether they have conditions with them or not. The fewer affinities they have, the more they want to save them. Why? If they don't rescue those without affinities, they will never gain affinities with them. Affinities come into being from one's wanting to establish them. So Buddhas have the great

compassion which includes those without affinities. They save all living beings.

"I wish the World Honored One would use the power of his great heroism, his great strength, his great kindness and compassion, to **'search out and dispel even the most subtle of my doubts,'** the things I can't uncover, the things I don't understand – my doubts, afflictions, and ignorance. Buddha, if I have these subtle doubts, please dispel them."

J4 He resolves to quickly accomplish proper enlightenment.

Sutra:

> ***"Causing me to quickly attain the***
> ***Supreme enlightenment,***
> ***And sit in the Bodhimanda of the***
> ***Worlds of the ten directions.***

Commentary:

"Causing me, Ananda, **to quickly attain the supreme enlightenment,** the Buddha Way, **and sit in the Bodhimanda of the worlds of the ten directions.** I will go throughout the worlds of the ten directions to teach and transform living beings and establish Bodhimandas. Sitting in the Bodhimanda, I will turn the Dharma wheel to teach and transform living beings."

J5 Non retreat.

Sutra:

> ***"Should even the shunyata nature***
> ***Entirely melt away,***
> ***This vajra mind will never waver."***

Commentary:

"Shunyata" is a Sanskrit word which means "emptiness." **"Should even the** nature of emptiness nature **entirely melt away…"** Could emptiness completely disappear? Basically, emptiness isn't there in the first place; how could it disappear?

Ananda brings up the analogy; his meaning is that emptiness can't disappear, but if it could, even if the shunyata nature melt away, nevertheless, **"this vajra mind will never waver."**

The solid vajra mind is the Shurangama King, the durable mind. It will remain unmoved. "Now I believe the Buddhadharma, and I have obtained my true mind, my durable mind in samadhi"; this is what Ananda is saying. "It is my decisive resolve to become a Buddha – a resolve that is eternally unmoving."

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When Buddhism first came to China from India, one of the most important tasks required for its establishment was the translation of the Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Chinese. This work involved a great many people, such as the renowned monk National Master Kumarajiva (fifth century), who led an assembly of over 800 people to work on the translation of the Tripitaka (Buddhist canon) for over a decade. Because of the work of individuals such as these, nearly the entire Buddhist Tripitaka of over a thousand texts exists to the present day in Chinese.

Now the banner of the Buddha's Teachings is being firmly planted in Western soil, and the same translation work is being done from Chinese into English. Since 1970, the Buddhist Text Translation Society (BTTS) has been making a paramount contribution toward this goal. Aware that the Buddhist Tripitaka is a work of such magnitude that its translation could never be entrusted to a single person, the BTTS, emulating the translation assemblies of ancient times, does not publish a work until it has passed through four committees for primary translation, revision, editing, and certification. The leaders of these committees are Bhikshus (monks) and Bhikshunis (nuns) who have devoted their lives to the study and practice of the Buddha's teachings. For this reason, all of the works of the BTTS put an emphasis on what the principles of the Buddha's teachings mean in terms of actual practice and not simply hypothetical conjecture.

The translations of canonical works by the Buddhist Text Translation Society are accompanied by extensive commentaries by the Venerable Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua.

BTTS Publications

Buddhist Sutras. Amitabha Sutra, Dharma Flower (Lotus) Sutra, Flower Adornment (Avatamsaka) Sutra, Heart Sutra & Verses without a Stand, Shurangama Sutra, Sixth Patriarch Sutra, Sutra in Forty-two Sections, Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva, Vajra Prajna Paramita (Diamond) Sutra.

Commentarial Literature. Buddha Root Farm, City of 10000 Buddhas Recitation Handbook, Filiality: The Human Source, Herein Lies the Treasure-trove, Listen to Yourself Think Everything Over, Shastra on the Door to Understanding the Hundred Dharmas, Song of Enlightenment, The Ten Dharma Realms Are Not beyond a Single Thought, Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma, Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma during the 1993 Trip to Taiwan, Water Mirror Reflecting Heaven.

Biographical. In Memory of the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua, Pictorial Biography of the Venerable Master Hsü Yün, Records of High Sanghans, Records of the Life of the Venerable Master Hsüan Hua, Three Steps One Bow, World Peace Gathering, News from True Cultivators, Open Your Eyes Take a Look at the World, With One Heart Bowing to the City of 10000 Buddhas.

Children's Books. Cherishing Life, Human Roots: Buddhist Stories for Young Readers.

Musics, Novels and Brochures. Songs for Awakening, Awakening, The Three Cart Patriarch, City of 10000 Buddhas Color Brochure, Celebrisi's Journey, Heng Ch'au's Journal.

The Buddhist Monthly–Vajra Bodhi Sea is a monthly journal of orthodox Buddhism which has been published by the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, formerly known as the Sino-American Buddhist Association, since 1970. Each issue contains the most recent translations of the Buddhist canon by the Buddhist Text Translation Society. Also included in each issue are a biography of a great Patriarch of Buddhism from the ancient past, sketches of the lives of contemporary monastics and lay-followers around the world, articles on practice, and other material. The journal is bilingual, Chinese and English

Please visit our web-site at **`www.bttsonline.org`** for the latest publications and for ordering information.

The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association

Mission

The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association (formerly the Sino-American Buddhist Association) was founded by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua in the United States of America in 1959. Taking the Dharma Realm as its scope, the Association aims to disseminate the genuine teachings of the Buddha throughout the world. The Association is dedicated to translating the Buddhist canon, propagating the Orthodox Dharma, promoting ethical education, and bringing benefit and happiness to all beings. Its hope is that individuals, families, the society, the nation, and the entire world will, under the transforming influence of the Buddhadharma, gradually reach the state of ultimate truth and goodness.

The Founder

The Venerable Master, whose names were An Tse and To Lun, received the Dharma name Hsuan Hua and the transmission of Dharma from Venerable Master Hsu Yun in the lineage of the Wei Yang Sect. He was born in Manchuria, China, at the beginning of the century. At nineteen, he entered the monastic order and dwelt in a hut by his mother's grave to practice filial piety. He meditated, studied the teachings, ate only one meal a day, and slept sitting up. In 1948 he went to Hong Kong, where he established the Buddhist Lecture Hall and other Way-places. In 1962 he brought the Proper Dharma to the West, lecturing on several dozen Mahayana Sutras in the United States. Over the years, the Master established more than twenty monasteries of Proper Dharma under the auspices of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association and the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. He also founded centers for the translation of the Buddhist canon and for education to spread the influence of the Dharma in the East and West. The Master manifested the stillness in the United States in 1995. Through his lifelong, selfless dedication to teaching living beings with wisdom and compassion, he influenced countless people to change their faults and to walk upon the pure, bright path to enlightenment.

Dharma Propagation, Buddhist Text Translation, and Education

The Venerable Master Hua's three great vows after leaving the home-life were (1) to propagate the Dharma, (2) to translate the Buddhist Canon, and (3) to promote education. In order to make these vows a reality, the Venerable Master based himself on the Three Principles and the Six Guidelines. Courageously facing every hardship, he founded monasteries, schools, and centers in the West, drawing in living beings and teaching them on a vast scale. Over the years, he founded the following institutions:

The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas and Its Branches

In propagating the Proper Dharma, the Venerable Master not only trained people but also founded Way-places where the Dharma wheel could turn and living beings could be saved. He wanted to provide cultivators with pure places to practice in accord with the Buddha's regulations. Over the years, he founded many Way-places of Proper Dharma. In the United States and Canada, these include the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas; Gold Mountain Monastery; Gold Sage Monastery; Gold Wheel Monastery; Gold Summit Monastery; Gold Buddha Monastery; Avatamsaka Monastery; Long Beach Monastery; the City of the Dharma Realm; Berkeley Buddhist Monastery; Avatamsaka Hermitage; and Blessings, Prosperity, and Longevity Monastery. In Taiwan, there are the Dharma Realm Buddhist Books Distribution Association, Dharma Realm Monastery, and Amitabha Monastery. In Malaysia, there are Zi Yun Dong Monastery, Deng Bi An Monastery, and Lotus Vihara. In Hong Kong, there are the Buddhist Lecture Hall and Cixing Monastery.

Purchased in 1974, the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is the hub of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association. The City is located in Talmage, Mendocino County, California, 110 miles north of San Francisco. Eighty of the 488 acres of land are in active use. The remaining acreage consists of meadows, orchards, and woods. With over seventy large buildings containing over 2,000 rooms, blessed with serenity and fresh, clean air, it is the first large Buddhist monastic community in the United States. It is also an international center for the Proper Dharma.

Although the Venerable Master Hua was the Ninth Patriarch in the Weiyang Sect of the Chan School, the monasteries he founded emphasize all of the five main practices of Mahayana Buddhism (Chan meditation, Pure Land,

esoteric, Vinaya (moral discipline), and doctrinal studies). This accords with the Buddha's words: "The Dharma is level and equal, with no high or low." At the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, the rules of purity are rigorously observed. Residents of the City strive to regulate their own conduct and to cultivate with vigor. Taking refuge in the Proper Dharma, they lead pure and selfless lives, and attain peace in body and mind. The Sutras are expounded and the Dharma wheel is turned daily. Residents dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to making Buddhism flourish. Monks and nuns in all the monasteries take one meal a day, always wear their precept sash, and follow the Three Principles:

Freezing, we do not scheme.
Starving, we do not beg.
Dying of poverty, we ask for nothing.
According with conditions, we do not change.
Not changing, we accord with conditions.
We adhere firmly to our three great principles.
We renounce our lives to do the Buddha's work.
We take the responsibility to mold our own destinies.
We rectify our lives to fulfill the Sanghan's role.
Encountering specific matters,
we understand the principles.
Understanding the principles,
we apply them in specific matters.
We carry on the single pulse of
the Patriarchs' mind-transmission.

The monasteries also follow the Six Guidelines: not contending, not being greedy, not seeking, not being selfish, not pursuing personal advantage, and not lying.

International Translation Institute

The Venerable Master vowed to translate the Buddhist Canon (Tripitaka) into Western languages so that it would be widely accessible throughout the world. In 1973, he founded the International Translation Institute on Washington Street in San Francisco for the purpose of translating Buddhist scriptures into English and other languages. In 1977, the Institute was merged into Dharma Realm Buddhist University as the Institute for the Translation of Buddhist Texts. In 1991, the Venerable Master purchased a large building in

Burlingame (south of San Francisco) and established the International Translation Institute there for the purpose of translating and publishing Buddhist texts. To date, in addition to publishing over one hundred volumes of Buddhist texts in Chinese, the Association has published more than one hundred volumes of English, French, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Japanese translations of Buddhist texts, as well as bilingual (Chinese and English) editions. Audio and video tapes also continue to be produced. The monthly journal Vajra Bodhi Sea, which has been in circulation for nearly thirty years, has been published in bilingual (Chinese and English) format in recent years.

In the past, the difficult and vast mission of translating the Buddhist canon in China was sponsored and supported by the emperors and kings themselves. In our time, the Venerable Master encouraged his disciples to cooperatively shoulder this heavy responsibility, producing books and audio tapes and using the medium of language to turn the wheel of Proper Dharma and do the great work of the Buddha. All those who aspire to devote themselves to this work of sages should uphold the Eight Guidelines of the International Translation Institute:

1. One must free oneself from the motives of personal fame and profit.
2. One must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.
3. One must refrain from aggrandizing one's work and denigrating that of others.
4. One must not establish oneself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with one's fault-finding.
5. One must take the Buddha-mind as one's own mind.
6. One must use the wisdom of Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles.
7. One must request Virtuous Elders of the ten directions to certify one's translations.
8. One must endeavor to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

These are the Venerable Master's vows, and participants in the work of translation should strive to realize them.

Instilling Goodness Elementary School, Developing Virtue Secondary School, Dharma Realm Buddhist University

"Education is the best national defense." The Venerable Master Hua saw clearly that in order to save the world, it is essential to promote good education. If we want to save the world, we have to bring about a complete change in people's minds and guide them to cast out unwholesomeness and to pursue goodness. To this end the Master founded Instilling Goodness Elementary School in 1974, and Developing Virtue Secondary School and Dharma Realm Buddhist University in 1976.

In an education embodying the spirit of Buddhism, the elementary school teaches students to be filial to parents, the secondary school teaches students to be good citizens, and the university teaches such virtues as humaneness and righteousness. Instilling Goodness Elementary School and Developing Virtue Secondary School combine the best of contemporary and traditional methods and of Western and Eastern cultures. They emphasize moral virtue and spiritual development, and aim to guide students to become good and capable citizens who will benefit humankind. The schools offer a bilingual (Chinese/English) program where boys and girls study separately. In addition to standard academic courses, the curriculum includes ethics, meditation, Buddhist studies, and so on, giving students a foundation in virtue and guiding them to understand themselves and explore the truths of the universe. Branches of the schools (Sunday schools) have been established at branch monasteries with the aim of propagating filial piety and ethical education.

Dharma Realm Buddhist University, whose curriculum focuses on the Proper Dharma, does not merely transmit academic knowledge. It emphasizes a foundation in virtue, which expands into the study of how to help all living beings discover their inherent nature. Thus, Dharma Realm Buddhist University advocates a spirit of shared inquiry and free exchange of ideas, encouraging students to study various canonical texts and use different experiences and learning styles to tap their inherent wisdom and fathom the meanings of those texts. Students are encouraged to practice the principles they have understood and apply the Buddhadharma in their lives, thereby nurturing their wisdom and virtue. The University aims to produce outstanding individuals of high moral character who will be able to bring benefit to all sentient beings.

Sangha and Laity Training Programs

In the Dharma-ending Age, in both Eastern and Western societies there are very few monasteries that actually practice the Buddha's regulations and strictly uphold the precepts. Teachers with genuine wisdom and understanding, capable of guiding those who aspire to pursue careers in Buddhism, are very rare. The Venerable Master founded the Sangha and Laity Training Programs in 1982 with the goals of raising the caliber of the Sangha, perpetuating the Proper Dharma, providing professional training for Buddhists around the world on both practical and theoretical levels, and transmitting the wisdom of the Buddha.

The Sangha Training Program gives monastics a solid foundation in Buddhist studies and practice, training them in the practical affairs of Buddhism and Sangha management. After graduation, students will be able to assume various responsibilities related to Buddhism in monasteries, institutions, and other settings. The program emphasizes a thorough knowledge of Buddhism, under-standing of the scriptures, earnest cultivation, strict observance of precepts, and the development of a virtuous character, so that students will be able to propagate the Proper Dharma and perpetuate the Buddha's wisdom. The Laity Training Program offers courses to help laypeople develop correct views, study and practice the teachings, and understand monastic regulations and ceremonies, so that they will be able to contribute their abilities in Buddhist organizations.

Let Us Go Forward Together

In this Dharma-ending Age when the world is becoming increasingly dangerous and evil, the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, in consonance with its guiding principles, opens the doors of its monasteries and centers to those of all religions and nationalities. Anyone who is devoted to humaneness, righteousness, virtue, and the pursuit of truth, and who wishes to understand him or herself and help humankind, is welcome to come study and practice with us. May we together bring benefit and happiness to all living beings.

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Verse of Transference

May the merit and virtue accrued from this work,
Adorn the Buddha's Pure Lands,
Repaying four kinds of kindness above,
And aiding those suffering in the paths below.

May those who see and hear of this,
All bring forth the resolve for Bodhi,
And when this retribution body is over,
Be born together in ultimate bliss.

Dharma Protector Wei T’o Bodhisattva

The Shurangama Sutra

The Shurangama Sutra

Volume Four

a simple explanation by the

Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

English translation by the
Buddhist Text Translation Society

Buddhist Text Translation Society
Dharma Realm Buddhist University
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Introduction

This is the fourth of eight volumes of the *Shurangama Sutra*, with commentaries from the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua.

The Buddha has just explained with clarity and eloquence the pervasiveness of the true mind with all of existence. But then, Purnamatreiyaniputra retraces the Buddha's past teachings and brings up two doubts.

In "The Reason for Continual Arisal" the Buddha explains why in the midst of fundamental purity existence (ignorance) suddenly arises.

In "The Reason for Perfect Penetration" the Buddha explains that the very question of the pervasiveness of the elements (water, fire, earth, wind, emptiness, seeing and consciousness) creating a chaotic and incompatible mix, is itself invalid.

Both doubts have false-thinking as the root.

In "Ananda Attaches to Causes and Conditions", Ananda still has residual fondness for causes & conditions. The Buddha reiterates that in the final true meaning, neither causes & conditions nor sponaneity will hold up. Again, Ananda's doubt has false-thinking as the root.

Ananda, realizing that great learning that is unmatched with cultivation ultimately bears no fruit, knows that he is still outside

the gates of Nirvana, and reverently asks for further instructions on how to progress towards perfect enlightenment.

In “The Two Decisive Doctrines”, the Buddha explains just that. First, in “Purification of the Turbidities”, the Buddha exhorts Ananda to purify the five turbidities of time, views, afflictions, living beings and lifespans. Second, in “Liberation of the Organs”, the Buddha demonstrates how one detaches oneself from the six organs: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind.

Surprisingly again, Ananda erroneously asks that since everything is fundamentally false and non-existent, how can it be used to achieve Nirvana? In “Hearing is Not Sound”, the Buddha upbraids Ananda for mistaking the false (sound) for the true (hearing).

Then Ananda, wishing to recognize his innate ignorance that causes him to revolve on the wheel of birth and death, asks for the location of the ‘knot’ of ignorance so that he and living beings of the future can untie it. In “The Source of the Knot”, the Buddha again reiterates that the source of ignorance lies in the six sense organs: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind.

Finally, the Buddha reveals that the source of enlightenment also lies in these very six knots!

User's Guide

to the Shurangama Sutra series

Because of the length of the *Shurangama Sutra*, and the need to provide aid to various readers, the Sutra has been compiled into a series of 9 books: the "Sutra Text and Suppliments", and the remaining Volumes one to eight.

The "Sutra Text and Suppliments" contains:

1. the entire Sutra text, which is in excess of 2700 paragraphs;
2. the entire outline, which contains 1676 entries;
3. and a master index, which has index references for both the "Sutra Text and Suppliments" and the eight volumes.

Volumes one to eight contain:

1. the Sutra text, with commentaries;
2. the local outline entries;
3. and a local index.

Readers who wish to read or recite the Sutra in its entirety will find the "Sutra Text and Suppliments" very useful.

Those who wish to deeply study the Sutra with its commentaries will find volumes one to eight indispensable.

Exhortation to Protect and Propagate

by Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua

Within Buddhism, there are very many important sutras. However, the most important Sutra is the *Shurangama Sutra*. If there are places which have the *Shurangama Sutra*, then the Proper Dharma dwells in the world. If there is no *Shurangama Sutra*, then the Dharma Ending Age appears. Therefore, we Buddhist disciples, each and every one, must bring our strength, must bring our blood, and must bring our sweat to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*. In the *Sutra of the Ultimate Extinction of the Dharma*, it says very, very clearly that in the Dharma Ending Age, the *Shurangama Sutra* is the first to disappear, and the rest of the sutras disappear after it. If the *Shurangama Sutra* does not disappear, then the Proper Dharma Age is present. Because of that, we Buddhist disciples must use our lives to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*, must use vows and resolution to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*, and cause the *Shurangama Sutra* to be known far and wide, reaching every nook and cranny, reaching into each and every dust-mote, reaching out to the exhaustion of empty space and of the Dharma Realm. If we can do that, then there will be a time of Proper Dharma radiating great light.

Why would the *Shurangama Sutra* be destroyed? It is because it is too true. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's true body. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's sharira. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's true and actual stupa and shrine. Therefore, because

the *Shurangama Sutra* is so true, all the demon kings use all kinds of methods to destroy the *Shurangama Sutra*. They begin by starting rumors, saying that the *Shurangama Sutra* is phony. Why do they say the *Shurangama Sutra* is phony? It is because the *Shurangama Sutra* speaks too truly, especially in the sections on The Four Decisive Deeds, the Twenty-five Sages Describing Perfect Penetration, and the States of the Fifty Skandha Demons. Those of off-center persuasions and externally-oriented ways, weird demons and strange freaks, are unable to stand it. Consequently there are a good many senseless people who claim that the *Shurangama Sutra* is a forgery.

Now, the principles set forth in the *Shurangama Sutra* are on the one hand proper, and on the other in accord with principle, and the weird demons and strange freaks, those in various cults and sects, all cannot hide away their forms. Most senseless people, in particular unwise scholars and garbage-collecting professors "Tread upon the holy writ." With their extremely scant and partial understanding, they are confused and unclear, lacking real erudition and true and actual wisdom. That is why they falsely criticize. We who study the Buddhadharma should very deeply be aware of these circumstances. Therefore, wherever we go, we should bring up the *Shurangama Sutra*. Wherever we go, we should propagate the *Shurangama Sutra*. Wherever we go, we should introduce the *Shurangama Sutra* to people. Why is that? It is because we wish to cause the Proper Dharma long to dwell in the world.

If the *Shurangama Sutra* is regarded as true, then there is no problem. To verify its truth, let me say that if the *Shurangama Sutra* were phony, then I would willingly fall into the hells forever through all eternity—for being unable to recognize the Buddhadharma—for mistaking the false for true. If the *Shurangama Sutra* is true, then life after life in every time I make the vow to propagate the Great Dharma of the Shurangama, that I shall in every time and every place propagate the true principles of the Shurangama.

Everyone should pay attention to the following point. How could the *Shurangama Sutra* not have been spoken by the Buddha? No one else could have spoken the *Shurangama Sutra*. And so I hope that all those people who make senseless accusations will wake up fast and stop creating the causes for suffering in the Hell of Pulling Out Tongues. No matter who the scholar is, no matter what country students of the Buddhadharma are from, all should quickly mend their ways, admit their mistakes, and manage to change. There is no greater good than that. I can then say that all who look at the *Shurangama Sutra*, all who listen to the *Shurangama Sutra*, and all who investigate the *Shurangama Sutra*, will very quickly accomplish Buddhahood.

Composed by Gold Mountain Shramana Tripitaka Master Hua
Translated by Bhikshuni Heng Hsien
Reviewed by Shramanerika Heng Wen

The Eight Guidelines

of the Buddhist Text Translation Society

1. A volunteer must free him/herself from the motives of personal fame and profit.
2. A volunteer must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.
3. A volunteer must refrain from aggrandizing his/her work and denigrating that of others.
4. A volunteer must not establish him/herself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with his or her fault-finding.
5. A volunteer must take the Buddha-mind as his/her own mind.
6. A volunteer must use the wisdom of Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles.
7. A volunteer must request Virtuous Elders in the ten directions to certify his/her translations.
8. A volunteer must endeavour to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

Outline

of the Shurangama Sutra

The outline for the Shurangama Sutra was compiled by Dharma Master Yuan Ying, which categorizes the various parts of the Sutra text consisting of over 2,700 paragraphs to 1,676 entries.

These entries are presented in the form of a tree-like structure, dividing the various parts of the Sutra text into groups, those groupings being sub-divided further and further, thus providing a detailed break-down of the entire text.

Though the outline is not a prerequisite to reading the Sutra text and the accompanying commentaries, it serves as a useful tool for students of the Way who wish to deeply study the Sutra. Without this outline, students may find it difficult to refer to specific parts of the text.

Because of the size of the outline (and the Sutra), only outline entries which pertain to the Sutra text contained within this book is included.

For the outline of the entire Sutra, please refer to the “Sutra Text and Suppliments”, where the entire sutra text, outline, and index entries are all combined into one single volume.

Outline of Shurangama Sutra - Volume Four

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釋迦牟尼文佛

Namo Original Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha

Verse for Opening a Sutra

The unsurpassed, profound, and wonderful Dharma,
Is difficult to encounter in hundreds of millions of eons,
I now see and hear it, receive and uphold it,
And I vow to fathom the Tathagata's true meaning.

CHAPTER 1

The Reason for Continual Arisal

G2 He casts out the subtle delusions by explaining about two aspects of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.
H1 Purnamaitreyani retraces the former teaching and brings up two doubts.
I1 He praises the Thus Come One's wonderful instructions.

Sutra:

Then Purnamaitreyaniputra arose from his seat in the midst of the Great Assembly, uncovered his right shoulder, knelt on his right knee, put his palms together respectfully, and said to the Buddha, "The most virtuous and awe-inspiring World Honored One has for the sake of living beings expounded the primary truth of the Thus Come One with remarkable eloquence.

Commentary:

Then, after Ananda had finished speaking his verse in praise of the Buddha, **Purnamaitreyaniputra arose from his seat in the midst of the Great Assembly.** "Purnamaitreyaniputra" means "Son of Fulfillment and Compassion." "Fulfillment" was his father's name; "Compassion" was his mother's name. He immediately stood up. The Buddha's disciples were especially respectful toward him. When they wanted to ask a question, they stood in reverence. He **uncovered his right shoulder.** The Chinese

sash is styled so that it does not cover the right shoulder, in order to represent this gesture of respect. In India it is never cold, winter or summer, so it was all right to leave the right shoulder completely exposed. One wouldn't get cold. But the climate in China is very cold, and if one's right shoulder were always exposed it would be easy to catch cold. So in China the monks wore clothing under their sashes. This accorded with the climate, the geographical location, and the customs in China.

The sashes in India did not have a clasp like the Chinese sashes do. Now in India, Burma, Ceylon, and Thailand, where the Theravada teachings are practiced, monks still don't have clasps on their sashes. Why do Chinese sashes have a clasp? This too came about because of the climate of China, for if the monks wore clothing inside their sashes, and if there were no clasp to hold the sash in place, it could slip off without their being aware of it. So the Patriarchs of China invented the clasp to solve this problem. The sashes of the other countries mentioned above have the same number of pieces, but they lack the clasp, because the climate is so warm that they don't wear clothing under their sashes. If it starts to slip off, they are aware of it since it is next to their skin.

After I left the home-life, I investigated the question of the clasp on the Chinese sash with a lot of Elder Dharma Masters and elder monks. I asked them why the monks from other countries did not have clasps on their sashes; why did the Chinese monks add this thing to their sashes? But they all shook their heads. They didn't know. It's a small matter, but nevertheless, they didn't know. They had never known. In the end, then, who told me? No one told me. I just compared the climate of China to that of the other countries and figured out for myself that the first Patriarchs who came to China must have invented the clasp to make it more convenient to wear clothes under the sash. When I brought up my opinion, the Elder Dharma Masters and monks said, "Oh, of course, that's how it was." Probably that's how it was. It was a small question, so no one had stopped to think about it, but I know that Americans like to

look into things thoroughly, so now I've explained the origin of the clasp on the Chinese-style sashes without waiting to be asked.

Purna uncovered his right shoulder and **knelt on his right knee.** The monks in present-day Burma and Ceylon have this practice. For instance, if a junior monk sees a senior monk he does not stand to talk but kneels with his right knee on the ground and his palms together.

Purna **put his palms together respectfully, and said to the Buddha, "The most virtuous and awe-inspiring World Honored One has for the sake of living beings expounded the primary truth of the Thus Come One with remarkable eloquence."** He said that the Buddha is one of awesome virtue who can subdue all the living beings in the three realms. His awesomeness has the power to cause all living beings to submit. His virtue moves all living beings, so that when they hear his name they change their faults and become good. The Buddha uses wholesome clever expedient devices to teach and transform living beings. He speaks the Dharma for the sake of living beings; he tells them in detail of the primary truth of the Thus Come One, the Tathagata's most wonderful doctrine.

I2 He discloses his own doubtfulness.

Sutra:

"The World Honored One often singles me out as the foremost among speakers of dharma. But now when I hear the wonderful and subtle expression of the dharma, I am like a deaf person who at a distance of more than a hundred paces tries to hear a mosquito, which in fact cannot be seen, let alone heard.

Commentary:

Purna has just bowed to the Buddha and made a request. Why did he do that? Because he had some doubts. Right now Ananda doesn't have any doubts, but Purna, first among those who speak Dharma, has given rise to doubts. He is not clear about the Dharma that the Buddha has spoken. Therefore he says, **"The World**

Honored One often singles me out as the foremost among speakers of dharma. You often choose me as the best among those who lecture the Sutras and speak Dharma. I, Purna, rank number one." He expresses well the wonderful meaning of all dharmas. If this Sutra were being explained now by Purna, flowers would rain from the heavens and golden lotuses would well up from the ground. It wouldn't be like my dry and bland explanation which puts my listeners to sleep. The Dharma Purna spoke was the foremost, most subtle and wonderful of Dharmas. He excelled in distinguishing the characteristics of all dharmas. **"But now when I hear the wonderful and subtle expression of the dharma, I am like a deaf person who at a distance of more than a hundred paces tries to hear a mosquito, which in fact cannot be seen, let alone heard."** His meaning is that someone who is truly deaf of course cannot hear such a small sound as the hum of a mosquito if he is more than a hundred paces away from it.

You can't even see a mosquito at that distance. This represents the fact that the Dharma the Buddha speaks is most subtle and wonderful, wonderful to the ultimate. Therefore, though Purna hears it because he is in the Dharma assembly, he is like a deaf person. He doesn't understand. So if there are people in the present who don't understand the Sutra, it's no wonder. You see, even Purna, who was foremost in speaking Dharma, had questions and said he didn't understand. In fact he says he's deaf. Whether you understand or not, you all can at least hear the explanation of the Sutra. This is a hundred times better than Purna. Don't be so hard on yourself

When the Buddha spoke the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, adherents of the Two Vehicles could not see the thousand-foot Nishyanda body of the Buddha. Instead they saw the Buddha as a venerable six-foot-tall bhikshu. When the Buddha spoke the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, some of his listeners had ears but did not hear the Buddha speaking Dharma. Purna is in a similar situation here. He certainly is not scolding the Buddha, nor is he saying that he does not believe the

Dharma the Buddha speaks. It's not that he doesn't believe it; he hasn't understood it. That's what this analogy represents.

Some people explain this phrase "wonderful and subtle expression of the Dharma" as meaning a very small sound; they say that the Buddha spoke the Dharma in a very quiet voice. They say that "subtle" here means "small." But that explanation is not correct. "Subtle" means rare and esoterically wonderful; it means an extremely clear explanation of the Dharma. It certainly does not mean that the Buddha spoke with a soft voice. Some people say, "Why does Purna compare himself to a mosquito? Because the Buddha spoke the Dharma with such a small voice that Purna felt it was like trying to hear a mosquito at a hundred paces." There are a lot of Dharma Masters who swallow the date whole, so to speak; they don't know the flavor of the text. They explain it like this: "Basically a deaf person can't hear anything; even less can he hear the Buddha speaking Dharma when he speaks with as small a voice as the sound of a mosquito." But this rendering of the words of the text is incorrect. Purna is using an analogy. Some people misunderstand, saying, "Oh, is Purna slandering the Buddha by calling him a mosquito?" That is not the case; you should not have that kind of doubt. In his analogy Purna likens himself to a deaf person; it is not that he likens the Buddha to a mosquito.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, although Ananda and those like him have become enlightened, they have not yet cast out their habits and outflows.

Commentary:

"World Honored One, although Ananda and those like him have become enlightened, they have not yet cast out their habits and outflows. Although they have understood the principle of becoming enlightened, their habits go back many lives, many aeons. And where do outflows come from? They come from habits. Habits aren't created in a day. They are learned from time without beginning, through life after life, in time after time, and from these

learned habits come all kinds of outflows. What is meant by "outflows"? Outflows are afflictions. The afflictions and habits of Ananda and those like him have not been completely done away with. They are called "remaining habits" – the ones left-over from former lives. They are more or less like karma.

The Buddha had a disciple called Pilindavatsa. One day he wanted to cross a river, and since he had been certified as having attained the fruition of Arhatship, he had certain powers. Rivers have spirits, and the spirit of this particular river was female. When Pilindavatsa got to the bank of the river he called out, "Little Slave, stop the flow!" One who is an Arhat has the spiritual power to part the waters when he crosses a river. But the one who stops the flow of the river must be the river-spirit. That is why Pilindavatsa called out, "Little Slave, stop the flow!" The first time he did that, the river-spirit was annoyed, but did not dare say anything because Pilindavatsa was an Arhat. But after he'd addressed her as "Little Slave" a number of times, the river-spirit finally went to the Buddha to state her case.

"When your disciple Pilindavatsa wants to cross the river he always addresses me as 'Little Slave.'" she complained. "And I'm outraged. Buddha, you should teach your disciples not to be so ill-mannered. How can he call me a name like that and command me the way he does?"

So the Buddha called for Pilindavatsa. "Apologize to the river-spirit," he said, "and don't talk that way any more." So what do you suppose Pilindavatsa did?

He said, "Little Slave, don't hold a grudge." The whole reason that she had become upset was that he had called her "Little Slave" in the first place!

Of course the river-spirit was furious. "See!" she cried. "Your disciple calls me that right in front of you!"

Shakyamuni Buddha said, "Do you know why he calls you 'Little Slave'? In five hundred former lives you were his servant. You've worked for him for so long that when he sees you he reverts

to his former habits and that name just slips off his tongue. He hasn't been able to change that habit from the past."

After the Buddha explained to the river-spirit, she realized it was a question of cause and effect and there was nothing more to say. The situation was resolved. That is an example of "not having cast out their habits and outflows."

Sutra:

"We in the assembly have reached the level of no outflows. Yet, although we have no outflows, we still have doubts about the dharma we have now heard the Thus Come One speak.

Commentary:

Purna said, **"We in the assembly,** the multitude of sages, **have reached the level of no outflows.** We have received the reward of the spiritual power of having extinguished all outflows. **Yet, although we have no outflows, we still have doubts about the dharma we have now heard the Thus Come One speak.** We still think up doubts. We still don't understand." Now if those who had attained the fourth fruition with the extinction of outflows didn't understand, how much the less would Ananda have understood, since he had only been certified as having attained the first fruition. Although he had attained that level of enlightenment, I believe he still wasn't clear about the meaning the Buddha had just expressed.

I3 He expresses two deep doubts.
J1 He wonders about the causes for the continual arisal of the myriad things.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, if all the sense organs, sense objects, skandhas, places, and realms in all the world are the Treasury of the Thus Come One, originally pure, why do there suddenly arise the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth – all conditioned appearances which cyclically change and flow, end and then begin again?

Commentary:

Purna has doubts about the doctrines the Buddha has been explaining. He doesn't believe them. **"World Honored One, if all the sense organs –** eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind – **sense objects –** forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and dharmas – **skandha –** form, feeling, thought, activity, and consciousnesses – if all these dharmas **in all the world are the Treasury of the Thus Come One, why do there suddenly arise the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth?** If they arise from the bright substance and pure nature of the everlasting true mind and are originally pure, then why does there suddenly arise in the purity of the Treasury of the Thus Come One so many things which are **all conditioned appearances which cyclically change and flow, end and then begin again?** Once finished, they begin again. Done once more, they start over. Ended, they arise once more. When do they ever stop? Never. What's the principle in it?" This is the doubt that Purna asks the World Honored One about.

J2 He wonders about the feasibility of the perfect fusion of the elements.

Sutra:

"Moreover, the Thus Come One said that earth, water, fire, and wind are by nature perfectly fused, are all-pervasive in the Dharma Realm, and are all tranquil and everlasting.

Commentary:

This is Purnamaitreyaniputra's second doubt. "What is the principle here?" he asks.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, if the nature of earth is pervasive, how can it contain water? If the nature of water is pervasive, then fire does not arise. Further, how do you explain that the natures of fire and water can each pervade empty space with out displacing one another? World Honored One, the nature of earth is solid; the nature of emptiness is penetrating. How can

they both pervade the Dharma Realm? I don't know where this doctrine is leading.

Commentary:

Purna probably was smarter than Ananda. Ananda hadn't even thought of such questions as these. So now Purna, for his part, has some doubts and asks about these principles. He says, **"World Honored One, if the nature of earth is pervasive, how can it contain water?"** Earth overcomes water; where there is dry land there is no water. If the nature of earth pervades the Dharma Realm, how can there be water there, too? Earth and water are not compatible.

"If the nature of water is pervasive, then fire does not arise." Water overcomes fire; where there is water, there is no fire. Water puts fire out. If the nature of water were to pervade the Dharma Realm, fire would certainly disappear. This is the same line of argument the Buddha used earlier with Ananda when he said that if there is light there can't be darkness and if there is darkness there can't be light. Now the Buddha's disciple uses the same pattern of questioning on the Buddha. "Water and fire don't mix," Purna points out. "This is a fixed principle."

"Further, how do you explain that the natures of fire and water can each pervade empty space with out displacing one another?" How do you come to understand that both fire and water pervade the Dharma Realm? I could believe that one or the other was all-pervasive, but if two incompatible things are both all-pervasive, then which one is going to win out? How do you know they can both be all-pervasive and not oppose one another, not harm one another or destroy one another?

"World Honored One, the nature of earth is solid; the nature of emptiness is penetrating. How can they both pervade the Dharma Realm?" Purna imagines that by now he probably has thoroughly confused the Buddha, so he calls out to him, "World Honored One!" Or maybe he was afraid that the Buddha was asleep. "Earth is a solid object," he reasons. "Emptiness is

penetrating – vacuous – there isn't anything there at all. So if there is earth, there is no emptiness; if there is emptiness, there is no earth. How can you say both these natures are all-pervasive? **I don't know where this doctrine is leading.** Buddha, your explanation of Dharma has managed to confuse me now. I can't tell what you're getting at. Where is this principle headed? What's its aim? I don't understand."

I4 He hopes for the Buddha's greatly compassionate instruction.

Sutra:

"I only hope the Thus Come One will compassionately explain in order to rend the clouds of confusion in me and among the Great Assembly." After saying this, he made a full prostration and respectfully and expectantly awaited the Thus Come One's unsurpassed compassionate instruction.

Commentary:

In stating these principles, Purna was certainly not trying to debate with the Buddha; he truly had such doubts. "Water and fire are not brothers; they can't dwell in the same household. Earth and emptiness are not compatible either." These questions made him nervous. "How can they all pervade the Dharma Realm?" he wondered, and on impulse, heedless of everything, he began to question the Buddha. In his haste, he even forgot about propriety. So, in conclusion he says, "**I only hope the Thus Come One will compassionately explain in order to rend the clouds of confusion in me and among the Great Assembly.** World Honored One, please let flow forth your heart of great compassion and explain this matter for us. My failure to understand these doctrines is like a bank of clouds covering me. Not only do I have these doubts, the members of the Great Assembly do also."

After saying this, he probably realized that he had been impertinent and over-exuberant, so he **made a full prostration and respectfully and expectantly awaited the Thus Come One's unsurpassed compassionate instruction.** He quickly knelt and

bowed to properly make his request of the Buddha. With reverence, he waited as if excessively thirsty for the Thus Come One to nourish him with the water of Dharma.

H2 The Thus Come One sequentially casts out the two doubts.
I1 In order to enable them to attain benefit, he promises to explain.

Sutra:

The World Honored One then told Purna and all the Arhats in the assembly who had extinguished their outflows and had reached the level of no study, "Today the Thus Come One will explain in depth the true, supreme meaning within the supreme meaning in order to cause all of you in the assembly who are fixed-nature Sound-Hearers and those arhats who have not realized the two kinds of emptiness, but are dedicated to the superior vehicle, as well as the others, to obtain the place of still extinction, the one vehicle, the true aranya, the proper place of cultivation. Listen attentively and I will explain it for you."

Purna and the others, revering the Buddha's expression of Dharma, listened silently.

Commentary:

The World Honored One then told Purna and all the Arhats in the assembly who had extinguished their outflows and had reached the level of no study – those who had been certified as having attained the fourth fruition of Arhatship. **"Today the Thus Come One will explain in depth the true, supreme meaning within the supreme meaning."** Here the Buddha is referring to himself when he says, "...the Thus Come One." "True, supreme meaning within the supreme meaning" refers to the most superior miraculous doctrine. He explains it **in order to cause all of you in the assembly who are fixed-nature Sound-Hearers,** that is, people who gain a little and are satisfied. They hang around in emptiness and stop searching. "I'm at a place where there isn't anything at all. It's not bad!" they think and become content. They gain a little and that's enough. That's why the Buddha calls them the "fixed-nature" Sound-Hearers – the Arhats – "sterile seeds and

withered sprouts” in order to scold them out of their complacency. They don’t have the impetus to go on. Having been certified as having attained the first or second fruition, they don’t seek to progress. They indulge in passivity. “It’s fine here,” they decide.

The Buddha will also explain for **those arhats who have not realized the two kinds of emptiness, but are dedicated to the superior vehicle.** This refers to arhats who have not yet understood the emptiness of people and the emptiness of dharmas, but who have turned from the small toward the great. And he will speak **as well** as all **the others** in the Great Assembly.

Shakyamuni Buddha is prepared to express the true superior meaning within the superior meaning, the wonderful within the wonderful, to cause the Arhats to obtain no outflows, to obtain the level of no study. To have “no outflows” means to have gotten rid of all one’s individual habits and faults, to have no afflictions, to have no fundamental ignorance. So if one destroys fundamental ignorance, afflictions also disappear. Since afflictions and ignorance are invisible, we don’t think of them as being plentiful; but in fact if they took form, they would fill up empty space throughout the Dharma Realm.

Now the Buddha wants to cause all living beings, all the Arhats, **to obtain the place of still extinction, the one vehicle, the true aranya, the proper place of cultivation.** The “One Vehicle” is the final meaning of the Middle Way, the principle of the Actual Appearance. It is the Great White-Ox Cart discussed in the *Dharma Flower Sutra*. That sutra says that there was a large house in which a great elder lived with his children. One day, when the elder was gone briefly, the children were playing in the house when suddenly it caught on fire. When the elder returned and saw the children in the burning house oblivious of the danger, he said to them, “Come to the door quickly! Outside I have sheep carts, and deer carts, and ox carts for you to play with.” When the children heard there were carts and things to play with, they came running out. The house burned to the ground, but the children did not perish. Once the

children got out of the house, they demanded the carts from the elder. He gave them instead a Great White Ox Cart – magnificent beyond any of their expectations.

The sheep carts and deer carts represent the Two Vehicles. The ox carts represent the Bodhisattva Vehicle. The Great White-Ox Cart represents the One Buddha Vehicle. It can transport all living beings across the current of afflictions from this shore of birth and death to the other shore of Nirvana.

An "aranya" is a Bodhimanda, a quiet place for cultivation. Why is the aranya described as "true"? Are there also "false" aranyas? A true aranya is a place where there is no chaos. No one talks. A lot of people dwell together, but it's as if there weren't anyone there at all. Not even the sound of a mosquito's breathing can be heard. If you want to cultivate the Way, you should learn not to talk so much. When there is too much talking, other people cannot reach samadhi. When it's time to talk, you should talk. But some disciples talk when it's not time to talk, and when it is time to talk, they don't. Would you say they are obedient or disobedient? An obedient disciple talks when it is time to talk, and when it is not time to talk he closes his mouth. If you are a good student, you are a good Buddhist disciple. If you are a good Buddhist disciple, in the future you will become a good Buddha. Are there Buddhas who are not good? Of course not. All Buddhas are good. But if you are not good you cannot become a Buddha. You first have to be good in order for it to count. In a true aranya people keep a tight schedule.

"Listen attentively and I will explain it for you." This is not simply the Buddha telling Purna and Ananda to listen carefully. Now I am explaining this Sutra, and it is me telling you to listen carefully.

Purna and the others, revering the Buddha's expression of Dharma, listened silently. "Revering" means that they listened with great respect to the Buddha speaking Dharma; they listened with very great regard for him; they listened silently. Not only do I

tell you not to talk, Purna and Ananda were also silent. They closed their mouths.

I2 His explanation.
J1 He answers Purna.
K1 First he speaks of the not-empty Treasury of the Thus Come One to explain the reason for the continual arisal.
L1 He answers the first question.
M1 He reiterates the question.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "Purna, you have asked why in fundamental purity the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth suddenly arise.

Commentary:

This passage begins an extremely important section of the *Shurangama Sutra*. It explains why people become people. **The Buddha said, "Purna, you have asked why in fundamental purity the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth suddenly arise.** You wonder why these things come to be in the originally pure Treasury of the Thus Come One." The Buddha reiterates the question Purna has just asked. Now he will answer it.

M2 He investigates the question.

Sutra:

"Have you not often heard the Thus Come One expound upon the wonderful light of the enlightened nature and the bright wonder of the fundamental enlightenment."

Purna said, "Yes, World Honored One, I have often heard the Buddha expound upon this subject."

Commentary:

The Buddha said to Purna, **"Have you not often heard the Thus Come One expound upon the wonderful light of the enlightened nature and the bright wonder of the fundamental enlightenment?"** "Thus Come One" is one of the ten titles of a Buddha. It is just another name for Buddha. Some people think

there is a certain Buddha named "Thus Come One" but that is not the case. Every Buddha in fact is called the Thus Come One.

"The enlightened nature" refers to each person's truly enlightened self-nature. "Wonderful light" means stillness and constant illumination. The word "wonderful" also represents purity. "The enlightened nature" is the one true principle – the Buddha-nature inherent in us all, the primary nature that multiplies to become myriad things. "Bright wonder" refers to illumination and everlasting quietness. Although it is quiet, it has the ability to illumine the entire Dharma Realm – the three thousand great thousand world system. "Fundamental enlightenment" refers to the natural, primary essence inherent within us, which neither increases nor decreases, is neither produced nor destroyed, is neither defiled nor pure. Fundamental enlightenment is also called "initial enlightenment."

Ignorance comes from the arisal of falseness in the primary truth. Based on fundamental enlightenment, there arises a kind of falseness – the function of according with conditions.

Purna said, "Yes, World Honored One, I have often heard the Buddha expound upon this subject. The Buddha frequently explains this doctrine."

M3 He pinpoints his delusion.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "You speak of the light of enlightenment; is it that the natural light is called enlightenment? Or are you saying that enlightenment is initially without light and that then there is a so-called brightening of the enlightenment?"

Commentary:

The Buddha said, "You speak of the light of enlightenment; is it that the natural light is called enlightenment?" "Light of enlightenment" refers to the "wonderful light of the enlightened nature" and to the "bright wonder of the fundamental enlightenment." The Buddha asks Purna, "Are you saying that the nature of

enlightenment is definitively bright? Is that what you refer to when you say ‘enlightenment?’ **Or are you saying that enlightenment is initially without light and that then there is a so-called brightening of the enlightenment?** Is this what you mean by ‘bright enlightenment’?” he asks Purna.

Sutra:

Purna said, “If the absence of light is called enlightenment, then there is no light whatever.”

Commentary:

At this point Purna is as impulsive as Ananda in answering the Buddha. **Purna said, “If the absence of light is called enlightenment, then there is no light whatever.** If enlightenment can be called enlightenment without bright added to it, then there isn’t anything that is bright.” His meaning here is that one certainly has to add light to enlightenment. But he is mistaken. Why? Enlightenment is fundamentally bright, and therefore there is no need to add any light to it. The light you add is not genuine light. This can be likened to the mani gem which is fundamentally bright. There is certainly no way to separate the mani pearl from its brightness. It’s not that brightness is added to the mani pearl to make it shine. Needing to add brightness would be like needing to turn on the light for it to be bright. But there is no need to “turn on” enlightenment because its fundamental substance is brightness. So Purna makes a mistake here.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, “If there is no bright enlightenment without light added to it, then it is not enlightenment with it; and it is not light without it. The absence of light is not the still, bright nature of enlightenment, either.

Commentary:

The Buddha said, “If there is no bright enlightenment without light added to it, then it is not enlightenment with it. If you say that unless light is added there is no bright enlightenment,

I say it is not enlightenment if you have to add light to it. **And it is not light without it.** Perhaps you say that there is no need to add light to enlightenment because enlightenment is not bright; however, **the absence of light is not the still, bright nature of enlightenment, either."** The "absence of light" refers to fundamental ignorance. "Your ignorance is not the still, bright nature of enlightenment" is what the Buddha is saying. The still enlightenment is neither produced nor extinguished, neither defiled nor pure. Enlightenment is said to be "still" because it is as calm and clear as water. Thus it is a mistake to suppose that you have to add light to enlightenment. To add light to enlightenment is to add falseness to truth. If you don't add light to it, there is no false in the true.

Sutra:

"The nature of enlightenment is essentially bright. It is false for you to make it bright enlightenment.

Commentary:

"The nature of enlightenment" refers to the inherent enlightenment of the self-nature. "It **is essentially bright, Purna. It is false for you to make it bright enlightenment.** If you say that light must be added to the nature of enlightenment, you create a falseness. If you falsely add light to enlightenment, it is not genuine enlightenment. It is an enlightenment created from false thinking. It is not the original enlightenment."

M4 He explains continual arisal.
N1 Initially there is sudden arisal.
O1 There is no enlightenment and the three subtle appearances arise.

Sutra:

"Enlightenment is not something that needs to be made bright, for once that is done, an object is established because of this light. Once an object is falsely set up, you as a false subject come into being.

Commentary:

"Enlightenment is not something that needs to be made bright." The enlightened nature and the basic enlightenment are certainly not something to which light must be added to make them enlightenment. They are bright enlightenment inherently. **For once that is done, an object is established because of this light.** If you add light to it, you set up an object – something about which there is an enlightenment. "An object" refers to the appearance of karma, the first of the three subtle appearances of delusion. This delusion establishes the object – the appearance of karma. **Once an object is falsely set up, you as a false subject come into being.** Once there is a falseness, the appearance of karma, you react to the falseness. It is the source of your false thinking. Basically there was no need to add light to enlightenment, but with this false thought the appearance of karma comes into being and from it your false subjectivity is created – an unreal process, which is the second appearance of delusion: the appearance of turning.

The general import of this section of text is that basically we are all Buddhas. Well, then, if we originally were Buddhas, how did we become ordinary beings? And why haven't living beings become Buddhas? Where does the problem lie? Originally we were no different from a Buddha. But living beings can be transformed from within the Buddha nature. How are they transformed? The Buddhas have millions of transformation bodies which come out of their light and nature. The Buddha-nature is light; but that refers to the wonderful light of basic enlightenment. Basic enlightenment is the natural inherent enlightenment of us all, and it is also the Buddha's light. And it is from within this light that the beings are transformed. To illustrate this point, I will use an analogy which is not totally apt, but which will suffice to make the principle clear. A transformation body of the Buddha is like a photograph of a person, except that the photograph has no awareness – it's inanimate – where as the Buddha's photographs are transformations. By transformation he produces a person whose nature comes from the Buddha and whose features have a likeness to the Buddha's.

It's also like a reflection in a mirror. When we pass by the mirror there is a reflection; once we've gone by it disappears. The Buddha's transformation-bodies are like this, too. Basic enlightenment is like the mirror. Suddenly in the mirror an image appears; this is likened to the arisal of the first ignorant thought. As soon as that thought arises, living beings come into existence.

Now we are talking about bright enlightenment. The basic substance of enlightenment is bright. Purna wants to add brightness to enlightenment. But enlightenment is like a light which is already on. If you flipped the switch, you have added something extra, and in the process you have turned it off. Purna thought that if you turned on the light it would get bright, and that before he flipped the switch there was no light. But it was fundamentally unnecessary. The fundamental substance of enlightenment is bright, with out anything more having to be done to it. And that is where the important point lies.

Sutra:

"In the midst of what is neither the same nor different, difference blazes forth. And what is different from that difference becomes sameness, because of the difference. Once sameness and difference are created then due to them what is neither the same nor different is further established.

Commentary:

The false setting up of the appearance of karma produces the appearance of turning. Once the appearance of turning arises then **"in the midst of what is neither the same nor different, difference blazes forth."** In the original emptiness where there is nothing that is the same and nothing that is not the same, difference comes into being, hot and bright as a fire. Originally there wasn't any sameness or difference in emptiness, but suddenly these two come into being to create the world. **"And what is different from that difference becomes sameness, because of the difference."** Next there comes into being what is not the same as the difference that has blazed forth in emptiness. After the appearance of turning

arises the appearance of manifestation; thus in emptiness the world manifests.

Purna asked why in the Treasury of the Thus Come One there suddenly arise the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth; the Buddha is now answering that question.

"Once sameness and difference are created then due to them what is neither the same nor different is further established." Emptiness originally has no appearance, but now the world manifests appearances. "What is neither the same nor different" refers to living beings. They are said to be "not the same" because each living being has a different appearance. They are said to be "not different" because all living beings share the quality of sentience. The appearance of karma, the appearance of turning, and the appearance of manifestation are all created from ignorance. This section has discussed the appearance of manifestation.

One unenlightened thought creates
The three subtle appearances.
What is experienced from them becomes the conditions
For the growth of the six coarse appearances.

These three delusions are primary and not easy to discern.

O2 The external environment becomes the conditions and extends into six coarse appearances.

Sutra:

"This turmoil eventually brings about weariness. Prolonged weariness produces defilement. The combination of these in a murky turbidity creates affliction with respect to wearisome defilement.

Commentary:

Now the six coarse appearances will be discussed. This section explains the first five coarse appearances.

The six coarse appearances are:

1. The appearance of knowledge.

This represents an inherent attachment to dharmas. The knowledge here is not ultimate wisdom; it is an appearance of awareness and is endowed with the ability to discriminate.

2. The appearance of continuation.

This represents a discriminating attachment to dharmas.

3. The appearance of grasping.

This represents the inherent attachment to self.

4. The appearance of reckoning names.

This represents the discriminating attachment to self.

5. The appearance of the arisal of karma.
6. The appearance of suffering bound to karma.

Because one is attached to karma, the appearance of this suffering follows.

The first time you hear these you probably won't understand much about them, but after you investigate them over a period of time you will come to understand. For now, let it pass into your ears, and in your eighth consciousness there will be an impression. If you investigate the Buddhadharma for a long time, it is certain that you will come to a point where things connect and you suddenly understand.

"This turmoil": in the midst of what is not the same and not different spoken about above, and the world and emptiness, "difference blazes forth," and a turmoil is created, lacking any order. This turmoil **"eventually brings about weariness."** In this sameness and difference which is suddenly created, a weariness eventually arises. The weariness is the first of the six coarse appearances: the appearance of knowledge. **"Prolonged weariness produces defilement."** Prolonged weariness is the second coarse appearance: the appearance of continuation. Defilement is the third coarse appearance: the appearance of grasping. **"The combination of these in a murky turbidity…** They get mixed up together and

there is no way to distinguish them clearly. This is the fourth appearance: the appearance of reckoning names. This turbidity **"creates affliction with respect to wearisome defilement."** Wearisome defilement is affliction; affliction is simply wearisome defilement. The 84,000 kinds of wearisome defilement are simply the 84,000 kinds of afflictions. From the various conditions just discussed, afflictions arise, and with afflictions come the mountains, the rivers, the great earth, and everything else. This is the fifth coarse appearance: the appearance of the arisal of karma.

Sutra:

"Arisal is the world; stillness is emptiness. Emptiness is sameness; the world is difference. What is neither sameness nor difference is the actual conditioned dharmas.

Commentary:

This section explains the sixth coarse appearance: the appearance of the suffering bound to karma. **"Arisal is the world."** Arisal is coming forth – movement. **"Stillness is emptiness."** Stillness is quiet – unmoving. **"Emptiness is sameness; the world is difference."** What is emptiness the same as? Originally emptiness is the same as everything. It is not different from anything because in emptiness there are no distinctions. It is just because there are no distinctions that it is called emptiness. But with the arisal of the world there is difference. The world is different from emptiness in that it has form, shape, and appearance. The arisal of the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth produce the world. This will be explained in detail later in the text.

"What is neither sameness nor difference is the actual conditioned dharmas." Originally there isn't anything in emptiness that can be said to be the same or different, with the arisal of:

1. the appearance of karma,
2. the appearance of turning, and
3. the appearance of manifestation

as well as

4. the appearance of knowledge,
5. the appearance of continuation,
6. the appearance of grasping,
7. the appearance of reckoning names,
8. the appearance of the arisal of karma, and
9. the appearance of suffering bound to karma.

We use the terms sameness and difference to describe what takes place.

N2 Afterwards there is continuation.
O1 The continuation of the world.
P1 The birth of the subjective realm becomes four elements.

Sutra:

"The interaction of bright enlightenment and dark emptiness sets them in a perpetual rotation; thus there is the pervasiveness of wind which supports the world.

Commentary:

The world has four elements: earth, water, fire, and wind. First we will discuss the pervasiveness of wind. When light is added to the genuine fundamental **bright enlightenment,** ignorance arises and the light is bound in duality with darkness. **Dark emptiness**: emptiness is some times murky and obscure. When the darkness of emptiness and the light of enlightenment interact, **the interaction sets them in a perpetual rotation.** Emptiness and the substance of bright enlightenment – that is ignorance which has resulted from adding bright to enlightenment – are set in opposition and eventually there is movement. As soon as there is movement, **there is the pervasiveness of wind.** With that movement, wind arises. Beneath the earth there is a pervasive wind **which supports the world.** Nowadays we talk about space where there is no atmosphere, but out beyond space there are other places where there is wind. "Pervasiveness" here is *lun* (輪) In the Chinese text;

lun means “wheel,” but such a literal translation is not necessary here, as the connotation is “pervasiveness.” The wind has a power which supports the world. This will be discussed in detail later in the text.

Sutra:

“Because emptiness produces movement, hardened light sets up a solidity which is the store of metal. Bright enlightenment makes this hardness; thus there is the pervasiveness of metal which secures the lands.

Commentary:

“Because emptiness produces movement, hardened light sets up a solidity which is the store of metal. The combination of light which has been added to enlightenment and the darkness of emptiness creates a movement which becomes wind. The hardness of this false light creates an obstructiveness which becomes metal. Metal is the hard quality of the element earth. **“Bright enlightenment makes this hardness.”** Because the light of metal is added to enlightenment, a solid quality arises; **“Thus there is the pervasiveness of metal which secures the lands.”** Within earth, water, fire, and wind, metal plays a part of supporting the world.

Sutra:

“Obstinate attachment to unenlightened awareness results in the formation of metals, while the vibration of illusory awareness causes wind to rise up. The wind and metal rub together; thus there is the light of fire which is changeable by nature.

Commentary:

“Obstinate attachment to unenlightened awareness results in the formation of metals.” Metal is hard and so is earth. This hardness collects in a store, **“while the vibration of illusory awareness causes wind to rise up.”** The metal creates a state of movement, and from that wind arises. In this situation the wind and

the metal come in contact. **"The wind and metal rub together; thus there is the light of fire which is changeable by nature."**

Sutra:

"The brightness of the metal produces moisture, and from the light of fire steam arises; thus there is the pervasiveness of water which encompasses realms in the ten directions.

Commentary:

"The brightness of the metal produces moisture." When metal is heated it will sweat; water drops will appear in its glossy surface. Because of the fire, a moisture is eventually produced on the metal. This moisture is one aspect of water. **"And from the light of fire steam arises."** From the moisture of the metal a moist vapor is produced. When the light of fire from below rises, it creates steam as it passes over the metal. **"Thus there is the pervasiveness of water which encompasses realms in the ten directions."** Because of the phenomenon of condensation and evaporation when the metal meets fire, there is the water cycle which encompasses the lands of the ten directions.

P2 The arisal of the objective realm becomes four habitats.

Sutra:

"Fire rises and water falls, and the combination sets up a solidity. What is wet becomes the oceans and seas; what is dry becomes the continents and islands.

Commentary:

After explaining the pervasiveness of water, the Buddha tells how the seas and mountains come into being. **"Fire rises and water falls."** Fire leaps high; water flows down. The previous passage says that the metal sweats and the fire rises so the moisture evaporates thus creating the water cycle. So the fire rises and the water falls, and **"and the combination sets up a solidity."** This produces the solid earth. **"What is wet –** the water that descends

and collects **– becomes the oceans and seas; what is dry becomes the continents and islands” –** the dry land.

Sutra:

“Because of this, fire often rises up in the oceans, and on the continents the streams and rivers ever flow.

Commentary:

“Because of this,” because the fire rises and the water falls, what is wet becomes the seas and what is dry becomes the land, **“fire often rises up in the oceans.”** Volcanoes and the like arise. Although it is the sea, there often arises the light of fire. **“And on the continents the streams and rivers ever flow.”** The rivers and streams flow on ceaselessly.

Sutra:

“When the power of water is less than that of fire, high mountains result. So it is that mountain rocks give off sparks when struck, and become liquid when melted.

Commentary:

Water and fire battle with one another and **“when the power of water is less than that of fire, high mountains result.”** When the fire overpowers the water, high mountains are formed. **“So it is that mountain rocks give off sparks when struck, and become liquid when melted.”** When you pound the rock, sparks form out of it. When you heat rocks to a certain point, they melt like in a volcanic eruption. How can volcanoes spew forth fire? It is because of the battle for power between water and fire.

Sutra:

“When the power of earth is less than that of water, the outcome is grasses and trees. So it is that groves and meadows turn to ashes when burned and ooze water when twisted.

Commentary:

“When the power of earth is less than that of water, the outcome is grasses and trees.” When the strength of the earth is

not as great as the strength of water the conditions of water and earth produce the grasses and trees. **"So it is that groves and meadows turn to ashes when burned and ooze water when twisted."** Ashes are simply earth. If you twist the blades of grass or parts of the tree, liquid will flow out.

P3 The result becomes the seed for continuation.

Sutra:

"A falseness is produced with interaction as the seeds, and from these causes and conditions comes the continuity of the world.

Commentary:

"A falseness is produced with interaction as the seeds." A false thought arises and fire and water become the seeds of mountains by mutual interaction. **"From these causes and conditions comes the continuity of the world."** From this interaction which forms the seeds, the world ends and then begins again. It is destroyed and then arises once more. Once it arises it is again destroyed. From production, dwelling, decay, and emptiness, and various circumstances, the continuity of the world is perpetuated, which goes on without cease.

O2 The continuation of living beings.
P1 The six kinds of falseness come into being.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Purna, the false brightness is none other than the mistake of adding light to enlightenment.

Commentary:

"Moreover, Purna, I will explain further. **The false brightness is none other than the mistake of adding light to enlightenment.** It's not something else playing tricks on you; it's simply that you wanted to add light to enlightenment. That's how the problem arose. Adding light to enlightenment is just like putting a head on top of a head."

Sutra:

"After the falseness of an object is established, the faculty of understanding cannot transcend it. Due to this cause and condition, hearing does not go beyond sound, and seeing does not surpass form.

Commentary:

"After the falseness of an object is established, the faculty of understanding cannot transcend it." The "falseness of an object" refers to the appearance of karma and corresponds to the earlier passage: "Once an object is falsely set up." The word "faculty" here refers to a false ability, the appearance of turning, and corresponds to the earlier passage: "Your false subject arises." "Understanding" here refers to ignorance, which is not flexible and cannot transcend the falseness of an object. **"Due to this cause and condition, hearing does not go beyond sound, and seeing does not surpass form."** Because of the appearance of karma and the condition of the appearance of turning, we don't hear anything beyond sound when we listen, and we don't see anything beyond form and appearance when we look.

Sutra:

"Forms, smells, tastes, and objects of touch – six falsenesses are realized. Because of them there is division into seeing, sensation, hearing, and knowing.

Commentary:

Because seeing does not surpass form, there arise **"forms, smells, tastes, and objects of touch."** This list of forms implies sounds and dharmas as well, the state of the six the filing objects. Thus **"six falsenesses are realized."** The six organs and six objects together create the six consciousnesses. **"Because of them there is division into seeing, sensation, hearing, and knowing**" **–** seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, sensation, and knowing, the six consciousnesses. The six consciousnesses are originally the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. So it is said:

One pure brightness in its origin,
It divides into six interacting aspects.

The one pure brightness is the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. The six interacting aspects are the eyes, which see form; the ears, which hear sounds; the nose, which smells scents; the tongue, which tastes flavors; the body, which is aware of sensation; and the mind, which knows dharmas. They are said to be six but in reality they are one. They are a function of the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

P2 Four kinds of birth happen in response.

Sutra:

"Similar karma binds together: union and separation bring about transformation.

Commentary:

"Similar karma" refers to the karma one creates and to one's father and mother – these causes and conditions are similar. "Similar karma" also refers to the mutual arisal of thoughts of love which **binds together.** Similar karma produces emotional love and prevents separation. Men and women become stuck together like glue. This binding together creates birth by womb and eggs.

Sutra:

"One sees that a bright spot is generated. At the sight of the bright spot conception comes into being. Differing views produce hatred; similar views create love. The flow of love becomes a seed, and the conception is drawn into the womb. Intercourse happens with a mutual attraction of similar karma. And so there are the causes and conditions that create the kalala, the arbuda, and the rest.

Commentary:

"One sees that a bright spot is generated." How do people become people? When a person comes into being, it is the eighth

consciousness which arrives first, and when a person dies, the eighth consciousness is the last to leave. So it is said:

Last to go;
First to come.
Thus it is the host.

Before the eighth consciousness leaves, the body will remain warm. Once the eighth consciousness goes, the body gets cold. Once it goes it becomes the intermediate *yin*-body. If one was a person, then one's intermediate *yin*-body has the appearance of a person. If one was an animal, the intermediate existence body has the appearance of an animal. It's just as if it was cast from a mold. No matter how far away from its potential father and mother it may be, it will find them if it has conditions with them. To the intermediate-existence body, everything is pitch black. We have lamplight and sunlight and moonlight, but the intermediate-existence body can't see them. What it sees is black as ink. So when the potential father and mother have intercourse, it will see a pinpoint of light at that place, because it has connections with them. **"At the sight of the bright spot conception comes into being."** What is conceived? Thoughts. **"Differing views produce hatred."** When people's opinions are not the same as yours, you come to hate them. **"Similar views create love."** When someone has false thoughts identical with your own, you grow to love them.

If the intermediate-existence body is male, it will love the mother and hate the father. It will want to strike its father and steal its mother. It wants to have intercourse with its mother. So the origin of people is very bad. When it loves its mother and hates its father, with that one thought of ignorance it enters the womb; **"the flow of love becomes a seed, and the conception is drawn into the womb."** If the intermediate-existence body is female, it will love the father and be jealous of the mother. That is how conception takes place.

Those who like to talk about love can't end birth and death. Love is the root of birth and death. Those who like to talk about love can very quickly end birth and death. How can I contradict myself this way and say that these opposite statements are both true? It's just here that the wonder lies. You advocate emotional love, but emotional love takes one down the road of birth and death. Why? People are born from love and desire and they die from love and desire. This is the ordinary occurrence. Everyone walks this road of birth and death.

So how can I say that if you think love is so important you can very quickly end birth and death? If you think love is so important, if you are so intent upon it, you should see through it and be done with it.

The sea of suffering is boundless.
A turn of the head is the other shore.

If you see through it, you can end birth and death. People are like cabbage-worms, which are born in a cabbage and die in the cabbage. People are born in love and desire and die in love and desire.

"The flow of love becomes a seed": men and women profess their love and keep expressing it until there is tangible evidence of it. Once the love becomes tangible, a seed can be produced.

"Conception" here refers to the eighth consciousness – the intermediate yin-body, also called the intermediate existence body or the intermediate-skandha body.

"And so there are the causes and conditions that create the kalala, the arbuda, and the rest." "Kalala" is a Sanskrit word that refers to the first week of embryonic development, the "slippery coagulation." The second week of development is called the "arbuda," the globule. The third week is called peshi, or soft flesh. The fourth week is called ghana, or solid flesh. The fifth week is called prashakha, or rudimentary embryo.

Let us look at this from the point of view of the Twelve Causal Conditions. The reason men and women fall in love – just that thought of love – is ignorance, that one thought of ignorance.

Ignorance conditions activity.

The activity is intercourse.

Activity conditions consciousness.

This is the eighth consciousness referred to above in the line "conception is received into the womb." The consciousness is the intermediate-skandha body entering the womb.

Consciousness conditions name and form.

"Name" refers to the first through fourth weeks of embryonic development. "Form" refers to the fifth and later weeks of embryonic development.

Name and form condition the six entrances.

By the seventh week of embryonic development, the organs are fully formed. The embryo has by now developed eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

Six entrances condition contact.

Once the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind are formed, there is an awareness of contact. The embryo in the mother's womb experiences the sensation of contact.

Contact conditions feeling.

The embryo is receptive to the contact.

Feeling conditions love.

When it receives the contact, it gives rise to love. This is the real beginning of love. And so to answer the question why men and

women come to love one another: it is because even at the fetal stage the cause has been planted – already there are thoughts of love.

> *Love conditions grasping.*

Once there are thoughts of love, one wants to have the object of love for one's own – one wants to become that thing.

> *Grasping conditions becoming,*
> *Becoming conditions birth.*

Once you've got it, you're born.

> *Birth conditions old age and death.*

Once there is birth there is death. So Arhats contemplate the Twelve Causal Conditions and know that the seed, the causes and conditions, are impure. The father's semen and the mother's blood are unclean things.

If you want to end birth and death, the first thing you must do is not give rise to ignorance. How do you do that? Don't have thoughts of emotional desire! Without ignorance there is no activity. Men and women get involved all because of that first thought of ignorance. And what is ignorance? It is "I don't know..." For instance when a man sees a woman she may be beautiful, but ultimately, why does his mind move? It is just when one's mind moves that one gives rise to ignorance. And when women have an emotional reaction to men, it is the same thing. Ignorance, therefore, is the root of birth and death. And it is the place that it all starts.

If you understand the Twelve Causal Conditions and are not turned around by them, then

> *When ignorance is extinguished,*
> *Activity is extinguished.*
> *When activity is extinguished,*

Consciousness is extinguished.
When consciousness is extinguished,
Name and form are extinguished.
When name and form are extinguished,
The six sense organs are extinguished.
When the six sense organs are extinguished,
Contact is extinguished.
When contact is extinguished,
Feeling is extinguished.
When feeling is extinguished,
Love is extinguished.
When love is extinguished,
Grasping is extinguished.
When grasping is extinguished,
Becoming is extinguished.
When becoming is extinguished,
Birth is extinguished.
When birth is extinguished,
Old age and death are extinguished.

This is the method of returning to extinction. If you take the road of arising in succession, you become a person. If you return to extinction, you can become a Buddha. So Arhats contemplate the Twelve Causal Conditions and think, "How do people come into being? Ah, their coming is extremely unclean. The combination of the father's semen and the mother's blood to make an embryo is impure." So they sever ignorance and end birth and death.

During the reign of the Emperor Wu of Liang, the Buddhadharma flourished. Whenever there was a wedding reception Dharma Masters were invited to recite Sutras. On children's birthdays, Dharma Masters were invited to recite Sutras. In short, no matter what the occasion, Dharma Masters were invited to recite Sutras and give their blessing. They would give a short speech about the auspiciousness of the event – what a lucky occasion it was. At that time there was a wealthy man who was celebrating the

marriage of his son. He invited Ch’an Master Chih Kung to recite Sutras and give the blessing. When Ch’an Master Chih Kung arrived and looked around, he said:

How strange! How bizarre!
The grandson marries the grandmother.
The daughter eats the mother’s flesh.
The drum the son beats is stretched
with the father’s skin.
Pigs and sheep are on the seat.
The six close kin cook in the brazier.
People gather to celebrate.
I see all this as a form of suffering.

Why was the grandson marrying his grandmother? It was because when the grandson was two years old, his grandmother died. As she was dying, she grabbed her grandson’s hand and said, “I’m at the point where I can let go of everyone else, but I can’t forget about my grandson. Who will take care of him in the future?” And she died clutching her grandson’s hand.

After her death she went before King Yama and he said, “Oh, you love your grandson so much? Fine. Go back and be your grandson’s wife.” So she was reborn as a woman and when she came of age, her grandson chose her as his wife. How did Ch’an Master Chih Kung know this? Because he had the ability to know others’ thoughts and the ability to perceive past lives – he had the Buddha Eye.

When he looked in front of the house he said, “The daughter eats the mother’s flesh,” because he saw a little girl chewing on a chunk of pork. Her mother had died and been reborn as a pig. The pig had been slaughtered and cooked, and she was actually eating the flesh of her own mother!

When he inspected the musicians in the band by the entrance way, he said, “The drum the son beats is stretched with the father’s skin.” The drummer was hitting a drum stretched with deer-hide.

His father had died and been reborn as a deer. The deer had been slaughtered and its hide tanned and the drummer was actually beating his own father!

Then Ch'an Master Chih Kung noticed that "Pigs and sheep are on the seat." He saw pigs and sheep sitting like guests on the *k'ang* – the high brick beds in the house. They were people now, but in their former lives they had been pigs and sheep. In their former lives they themselves had been eaten, so now they were reborn as people who in turn ate pigs and sheep to even up the debt.

When the Ch'an Master took a look at the cooking pots' he exclaimed, "Six close kin cook in the brazier." The six kinds of close kin refer to relatives on the father's side and the mother's side, kin of the brother and sisters, and so forth. They had been close relatives of these people but now had been reborn as pigs and sheep, had been slaughtered, and were being cooked in the brazier.

Ch'an Master Chih Kung summarized, "People gather to celebrate." Everyone who came was saying, "Congratulations!" and "Best Wishes!" But the Master notes, "I see all this as a form of suffering." What I see is actually suffering.

Sutra:

"The womb-born, egg-born, moisture-born, and transformation-born come about in response: the egg-born come from thought, the womb-born are due to emotion, the moisture-born arise from union, and transformations occur through separation.

Commentary:

"The womb-born, egg-born, moisture-born, and transformation-born: these are four kinds of birth. The "womb-born" are mammals. The "egg-born" are feathered vertebrates – birds and the like. The "moisture-born" are creatures born out of water. The "transformation-born" are beings that change form – they seem to be there and then disappear. They seem not to be there and then appear.

They **“come about in response.”** In every kind of birth there is a stimulus and a response. For instance, **“The egg-born come from thought.”** There must be four conditions present for birth from eggs to occur:

1. the condition of a father,
2. the condition of a mother,
3. the condition of individual karma, and
4. the condition of warmth.

With them, the egg-born come from thought. For example, a mother hen sits on her eggs all day long; she gets unbearably hot, but she won’t get up. Once a day she leaves long enough to defecate and eat a little, and then she goes right back to sitting and thinking, “Come out, little chicks. Hatch, little ones.” That’s why it says that the egg-born come from thought.

“The womb-born are due to emotion, the moisture-born arise from union.” Moisture-born beings can come about from two conditions:

1. the condition of sunlight, and
2. the condition of moisture.

“Transformations occur through separation.” These beings are created from karma alone and are changeable. They appear and disappear; disappear and appear. Transformation is attributable to a strong desire for the new and a dislike for the old, hence it occurs through separation.

P3 The results become continuation.

Sutra:

“Emotion, thought, union, and separation go through further changes, and from all the karma received one either rises or sinks. From these causes and conditions comes the continuity of living beings.

Commentary:

“Emotion, thought, union, and separation go through further changes.” There is a combined interaction involving change, over and over again. **“And from all the karma received one either rises or sinks.”** From the retribution undergone, beings vary from birds in the air to fish in the sea. **“From these causes and conditions comes the continuity of living beings.”** Living beings are those receiving twelve kinds of rebirth:

1. those born from wombs,
2. those born from eggs,
3. those born from moisture,
4. those born by transformation,
5. those born with form,
6. those born without form,
7. those born with thought,
8. those born without thought,
9. those born not totally with form,
10. those born not totally without form,
11. those born not totally with thought, and
12. those born not totally without thought.

This is the ceaseless continuation of living beings. First we discussed the continuity of the world. Next we have discussed the continuity of living beings.

O3 The continuation of karmic retribution.
P1 The source of karmic retribution is pointed out.

Sutra:

“Purna, thought and love become bound together so that people love each other and cannot bear to be apart. As a result, the world has seen an endless succession of births of parents, children, and grandchildren. And the basis for all of this is desire and greed.

Commentary:

“Purna, all the living beings in the world have **thought and love become bound together.** False thinking and desirous love link up **so that people love each other and cannot bear to be apart.”** They get attached to their feelings of love and cannot renounce them. This karmic response is such that they become stuck together like glue. **“As a result, the world has seen an endless succession of births of parents, children, and grandchildren. And the basis for all of this is desire and greed.”** These kinds of living beings base themselves in emotional desire.

Sutra:

“Greed and love feed on one another until greed becomes insatiable. As a result, in the world all the sentient beings born of eggs, wombs, moisture, and by transformation tend to devour one another for the nourishment of their bodies to the extent that their strength permits. And the basis for all of this is killing and greed.

Commentary:

“Greed and love feed on one another until greed becomes insatiable.” Every creature wants to nourish its own body. The greed cannot be stopped. **“As a result, in the world all the sentient beings born of eggs, wombs, moisture, and by transformation tend to devour one another for the nourishment of their bodies to the extent that their strength permits.”** Depending on how strong they are, they eat one another. You eat me and I eat you. Big worms eat little worms. Big fish eat little fish. Big beasts eat smaller creatures. For instance, if a tiger finds a being smaller than itself it will eat it. The weak become the food for the strong. Snakes feed on mice. But that’s in the summer. In the winter, snakes are incapacitated by the cold. So then, the mice eat the snakes. You eat me; I eat you.

The Great Golden Winged *P’eng* Bird used to eat dragons from the ocean the way people eat noodles. The wingspan of the P’eng Bird is 330 yojanas. One small yojana is 40 *li*. (A *li* is about 1/3 of

a mile.) A middle-sized yojana is 60 *li*. And a large yojana is 80 *li*. One flap of the P'eng Bird's wings would wash away all the water of the ocean and reveal the dry bed at the bottom. His method for eating dragons was to flap his wings over the ocean, which would part the waters and reveal the dragons on the bottom; then he would help himself to a meal. So the dragons kept getting taken by surprise. With nowhere to hide and no time to disappear and no way to escape, their numbers were dwindling rapidly. Finally some dragons went to the Buddha to protest.

"Buddha, you are one of great compassion, the Greatly Enlightened World Honored One. The Great P'eng Bird is eating our children and grandchildren and soon our whole species will become extinct. What can be done?"

The Buddha replied, "Don't worry. I'll think of a way to help you." Next time the P'eng Bird came to see the Buddha, the World Honored One told him, "Don't eat dragons anymore. The dragons are becoming extinct because you eat so many of them."

The P'eng Bird argued, "But if I don't eat dragons, I'll starve. I won't have anything to eat!"

"Don't worry," said the Buddha. "From now on every time my disciples eat, they will serve you a little food." So in Buddhism, at the noon meal, a little food is taken outside during the High Meal Offering. It is given to the Great Golden-winged P'eng Bird to eat. This story is another example of the competition for survival.

"And the basis for all of this is killing and greed." These kinds of living beings kill one another off. The fundamental characteristics of their karmic offenses come from greedy desire and a fondness for killing.

Sutra:

"A person eats a sheep. The sheep dies and becomes a person. The person dies and becomes a sheep, and it goes on that way through ten births and more. Through death after death and birth after birth, they come back to eat one another.

The evil karma becomes innate and exhausts the bounds of the future. And the basis for all of this is stealing and greed.

Commentary:

"A person eats a sheep." People like to eat lamb and mutton. Although only the sheep is mentioned in the text, all the other animals are implied. Pigs, cows, chickens, and the like are all included. So the person eats the flesh of the sheep. **"The sheep dies and becomes a person."** I just recited Ch'an Master Chih Kung's poem for you, and now the text verifies it. **"The person dies and becomes a sheep."** "I don't believe it." you say. "There's no such principle. How can a person become a sheep and a sheep become a person?" If you don't believe it, there's nothing left but for you to try it out. Go ahead and give it a try! When you die and go off to rebirth and wind up on the womb of a sheep, you'll think, "The Dharma that Dharma Master was explaining was true after all." But then it will be too late. If you want to cultivate the Way then, it won't be easy to do so in the belly of a sheep.

"And it goes on that way through ten births and more." "Ten births" can be explained as ten of the list of the twelve kinds of rebirth mentioned. It can also mean one life, two lives, three lives, four, five, six, and so forth. So it is said:

Once you lose a human body,
You may not get it back in ten thousand rebirths.

If you lose the body of a human being and turn into an animal, it's not at all easy to get back into the human realm. It might take one life, two lives, three lives, up to ten lives, and even then it's not certain you will be able to get back to the human realm. And so it's also said:

A human life is hard to get.
The Buddhadharma is difficult to encounter.

At present, all of us have human bodies. Regardless of what nationality or race we are, we are all human. So now that we have

the good fortune of a human life, we should quickly cultivate. Let us just look at America, with its millions of people. The number who are truly studying the Buddhadharma and hearing it explained every day amount to us dozen or so here in San Francisco. There may be other places, but none of them study and practice as intensely as we do. And how many people in the United States can explain the entire Shurangama Sutra? Not more than two or three, and it might be pushing it to say two. So wouldn't you say the Buddhadharma is difficult to get to hear?

"Through death after death and birth after birth, they come back to eat one another." The sheep dies and becomes a person. The person dies and becomes a sheep. You eat me and I eat you. You fill my belly and I fill your belly. We keep changing places; you eat my flesh, I eat your flesh. So the sheep gets plump and the person gets paunchy, until it becomes a contest to see who can out-eat the other. Not only do they eat like this for one life, it goes on for ten lives and more. So, people, don't get too obese. Don't compete with the sheep to see who can get fatter. That's no way to even the score.

"The evil karma becomes innate and exhausts the bounds of the future." The battle goes on: you take a bite of me in this life, next life I'll take two bites of you. You eat two bites of me, I'll help myself to four bites of you. The interest rate keeps multiplying. And this process never stops; it reaches to the bounds of the future. What are the "bounds of the future"? That means tomorrow. And tomorrow. Tomorrow and tomorrow. How many tomorrows are there? They exhaust the bounds of the future. They never cease. Now what about that? Dangerous or not? If you want to try it out, take my advice and don't. It's too dangerous to play around with.

"And the basis for all of this is stealing and greed." Stealing is taking what is not given. For instance, when you eat the flesh of a sheep, the sheep certainly did not give it to you. It's not like the case of the deer of the Deer Wilds Park who offered one deer to the king every day. They chose to do that, and perhaps there wouldn't

even be a retribution to repay in that case. But if you capture and kill a sheep for no reason but to eat its flesh, you have stolen. You eat his flesh and thereby take what is not given, and so he gains rebirth as a person and you become a sheep in your next life and in this way you keep stealing from each other. You stole his flesh so now he steals your flesh. A sheep dies and becomes a person and his rebirth is a case of causal reward, though you may not realize it. So the whole situation is extremely dangerous. I hope my disciples won't flirt with danger and try things out, only to end up as sheep or pigs, because I don't want my disciples to fall. I want them all to become Buddhas a little sooner. So today I urge you, don't try out that dangerous path!

P2 Karmic debts must be repaid.

Sutra:

"'You owe me a life; I have to repay my debt to you.' From these causes and conditions we pass through hundreds of thousands of aeons, in a sustained cycle of birth and death.

Commentary:

"You owe me a life; I have to repay my debt to you." If you take my life, you must repay me for it; if I take your life I also have to return it to you in kind. If you borrow from me you must repay the debt; if I borrow from you I must also pay you back. **"From these causes and conditions we pass through hundreds of thousands of aeons, in a sustained cycle of birth and death."** Even after millions of aeons we are still caught in the perpetual cycle of birth and death.

Sutra:

"'You love my mind; I adore your form.' From these causes and conditions we pass through hundreds of thousands of aeons, in a sustained mutual entanglement.

Commentary:

As soon as this passage of text is read you should feel total fear. Look at what it says: **"You love my mind; I adore your form."** The arisal of love is the birth of ignorance. "Adore your form" means there is activity. "From ignorance arises activity." This is again the topic of men and women. In fact, in this world, apart from the question of men and women, there's really nothing to say. Thus if the Buddha's Sutras don't talk about it from one angle, they refer to it from another angle. But it's not the case that the Buddha advocated love when he said, "You love me and I love you." He wasn't promoting free love which ignores all the rules. **"From these causes and conditions we pass through hundreds of thousands of aeons, in a sustained mutual entanglement."** It is just as if you were glued together and can't get apart despite yourselves. You get really sticky. And you think the whole thing is just what you always wanted. But actually since you're stuck there, you can't get to the position of Buddhahood. And you still think it's not bad? Love, love, love – what?

P3 The result becomes continuation.

Sutra:

"Killing, stealing, and lust are themselves the basic roots. From these causes and conditions comes the continuity of karmic retribution.

Commentary:

Where does karmic retribution come from? It is produced from **"Killing, stealing, and lust"** If you kill, you create the karma of killing. If you steal, you create the karma of stealing. If you lust, you create the karma of deviant sex. These three kinds of karma are also called the three evils of the body. They are **"themselves the basic roots. From these causes and conditions comes the continuity of karmic retribution."**

The continuity of karmic retribution supports the continuity of living beings and the continuity of living beings supports the

continuity of the world. The continuity of the world in turn supports the continuity of karmic retribution, and so the cycle completes itself and is endless. It ends and begins again, ends and begins again. That's the way this world is. If you think this world is really fine – exciting and beautiful – then go ahead and enjoy your self. If you think it is not so good, you can come back home. Where's home? It's at the position of Buddhahood.

M5 He concludes his answer by showing the relationship among them.

Sutra:

"Therefore, Purna, the three kinds of upside down continuity come from the light which is added to enlightenment. With this false enlightening of the knowing-nature, subjective awareness gives rise to objective appearances. Both are born of false views, and from this falseness the mountains, the rivers, the great earth, and all conditioned appearances unfold themselves in a succession that recurs in endless cycles."

Commentary:

After the Buddha finished explaining the continuity of the world, the continuity of living beings, and the continuity of karmic retribution, he called to Purna again. **"Therefore, Purna, the three kinds of upside down continuity come from the light which is added to enlightenment."** The continuity of the world is the arisal, dwelling, change, and extinction of the world, which goes on perpetually. Living beings go through a similar process of birth, dwelling, change, and extinction, ceaselessly without end. Karmic retribution also occurs with production, dwelling, change, and extinction, forever and ever. These three kinds of continuity arise from ignorance.

The world is established because of ignorance. So there is the ignorance of the world, the ignorance of living beings, and the ignorance of karmic retribution. Every conditioned dharma arises from ignorance. Ignorance is the mother of all conditioned existence. Thus if people can smash ignorance, they can see the

Dharma-nature. Until you have smashed ignorance, you cannot see your Dharma-nature.

Why is this world sustained by the three kinds of up side-down continuity? Adding light to fundamental enlightenment turns it into ignorance. **"With this false enlightening of the knowing-nature, subjective awareness gives rise to objective appearances.** With the birth of ignorance, an empty and false knowing-nature comes into being and because of it, the objective realm is perceived. **"Both are born of false views, and from this falseness the mountains, the rivers, the great earth, and all conditioned appearances unfold themselves in a succession that recurs in endless cycles."** Despite the vastness of the plains, forests, and all the myriad appearances, there is a definite sequence to it all, and never any randomness or disarray. Once this empty falseness arises, it goes on and on. It finishes and then begins again, ends and then starts over. For instance, people die and then are reborn, and once born they die again, and after death they are born again. They keep turning around. Yet people never wake up and wonder, "Why do I get born and then die, die and then get born?" They don't look into this question. They never figure out why they get born and why they die. So when they're born they don't understand what's going on and when they die they're even more confused. So the saying:

> *When you come you are disoriented.*
> *When you go you are confused.*

Since they are so unclear about their coming and going, you can imagine that their lives as people pass in a daze as well. And it's just in this lack of clarity that the process continues. They are born and die, die and are born. Pitiful? What ultimate meaning is there in all of this?

The ultimate meaning of being in this world is making a little money and eating a little food. You don't have any money so you have to go to work. You make money in order to buy food and clothes. Really, if all there is to this life is eating, wearing clothes,

and living in a nice house, it's really meaningless! It would be better to die right this minute! Think about it: you have to go to work and when you come home you have to eat. You have to keep trying to fill that bottomless pit. You fill it up today, and by tomorrow it all has flowed out again. You fill it one day and the next day it's empty again, even to the point that you fill it in the morning and it's hungry by noon. Again you fill the hole, and by evening you're hungry yet again. You have to move out the old to make room for the new. Going through such a lot of trouble every day seems totally meaningless. There's a poem that goes:

From of old until today,
few people have lived past seventy.
First subtract the early years
and then the years of age:
Between the two there is not much time
that is left at all.
And of that, remember,
sleep takes up the better half!

From ancient times until the present day, the number of people who have lived past seventy are very few. And in the early years, before one is fifteen years old, one can't really do anything. Americans become of age at eighteen, but Chinese children still rely on their parents at twenty-five! So first you must subtract the early years. Someone says, "My kid carries papers and makes money." Sure, but he can't make much. You can't really count that as carrying on a business.

From the end of the lifespan you also have to subtract fifteen years – the years of old age. In the last fifteen years you are physically unable to do very much. Your eyes go bad, your ears get deaf, your teeth fall out, and your hands shake-You can't even get your legs to work right. Your four limbs are of no use any more. So if one lives to be seventy, and we take off fifteen years at the beginning and fifteen years at the end, there isn't much time left in

between. There are forty years left.’ But that is not forty years of productiveness. Half of it is taken up in sleep. And then if you take into account going to the bathroom, putting on and taking off clothes, you’ll have to subtract some more time. So at the very most a human lifespan has about twenty productive years to it. So what’s so great about it?

That reminds me of three old men who got together to celebrate New Year’s. One was sixty years old, one was seventy, and one was eighty. These three old cronies went out dutch to ring out the old and ring in the new, and the sixty-year-old said:

“This year we celebrate with wine and cheer.
I wonder next year who won’t be here.”

The seventy-year-old said, “You’re thinking too far in the future.”

“Oh?” said the sixty-year-old. “What do you say about it?”

The seventy-year-old said:

“Tonight when I take off my shoes and socks,
Will I put them on again tomorrow or not?”

The eighty-year-old said, “You’re looking too far ahead yourself.”

“Well, what do you say about it?” asked the seventy year-old.

The eighty-year-old said:

“I let out this breath of air, and then
I’m not sure if I’ll ever breath in again.”

These three old-timers were looking into the question of birth and death. In the end, could they end birth and death? If they had met a Good Knowing Advisor, a bright-eyed teacher, they’d still have had a chance. If they didn’t encounter a bright-eyed teacher, I believe they couldn’t have ended birth and death.

There's another incident that had bearing on this topic. Once there was a man who died and went before King Yama. So a soon as he saw King Yama, he started to argue his case. He said, "You are really inhumane. If you wanted me to come see you, you should have written me a letter. If you had informed me clearly in advance, I could have prepared. But you didn't write a letter or make a phone call or send a telegram to let me know. You just captured me without warning, and I find that totally unreasonable."

King Yama said to him, "I sent you a lot of letters. You just didn't realize it."

"I never got any letters from you," the man protested.

Yama said, "The first letter I gave you was when your neighbor had a child that died at birth. You were already quite old, and if a newborn child could die, weren't you even more vulnerable? You should have wakened up at that point and started to cultivate."

"And then didn't there come the time when your eyes went bad and you could no longer see clearly? That was the second letter. In time your ears went deaf, right? That was the third letter. Wasn't there a point when your teeth fell out? That was the fourth letter."

"I didn't recognize the words of your letters, Yama. What was the last one you sent?"

"Didn't you notice that your hair was getting white? That was the last letter. Now I see how much pork you have eaten, so you can go to rebirth as a pig."

So the man turned into a pig. When would he get to be a person again? Nobody knows.

Now that the continuity of karmic retribution has been explained, everyone should return the light and look within and figure out what he or she is going to do. Someone says, "I know. I'm going to leave the home-life."

You want to leave the home-life? That's fine if you really do it. Someone else says, "Hearing this, I think human life is really meaningless and I'd like to just lay down and die.

That's all right, too, but it's not for sure that you won't get sent off to be a pig like that old man was. Pigs are really doltish. So people who are dull-witted become pigs in the future. And the whole reason for studying the *Shurangama Sutra* is to learn how not to be a dolt. It is to help you open your wisdom. If you have wisdom, the three kinds of continuity won't have anything to do with you.

So you wonder, "Wouldn't it be anarchy if the world and living beings and karmic retribution didn't have anything to do with me?"

No, because at that point you have a connection with the Buddhas. You are a relative of the Bodhisattvas, and a brother or sister of the Arhats. So you certainly won't be an anarchist.

L2 The explanation brings up another question.
M1 Purna attaches to causes and doubts effects.

Sutra:

Purna said, "If this wonderful enlightenment, this basic miraculous enlightened brightness which is neither greater than nor less than the mind of the Thus Come One, abruptly brings forth the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth, and all conditioned appearances, then now that the Thus Come One has attained the wonderful empty bright enlightenment, will the mountains, the rivers, the great earth, and all conditioned habitual outflows arise again?"

Commentary:

Having heard Shakyamuni Buddha's explanation of the three kinds of upside-down continuities, **Purna** had something else to say. **"If this wonderful enlightenment, this basic miraculous enlightened brightness which is neither greater than nor less than the mind of the Thus Come One"**: this refers to the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. On the part of a Buddha, the Treasury of the Thus Come One does not increase, and on the part of living beings it does not decrease. Living beings are replete with the basic miraculous enlightened brightness, just as the Buddha is.

Yet it **abruptly brings forth the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth, and all conditioned appearances**. Since that's the way it is, why for no reason do the mountains, the rivers, the great earth, and all the other conditioned appearances suddenly arise? You say that they arise from the Treasury of the Thus Come One. Why does that happen? There doesn't seem to be any reason for it."

This section of text voices the doubt that Purna has now. He wonders if living beings' "causal mind" – that is, their Buddha-nature – has a beginning, and he wonders if the fruition of Buddhahood has an end. He's asking if there will be a time when the Buddha will no longer be a Buddha and will become a living being again. He says, **"Then now that the Thus Come One has attained the wonderful empty bright enlightenment, will the mountains, the rivers, the great earth, and all conditioned habitual outflows arise again?** Buddha, you don't have any left-over habits, and you have extinguished your outflows. Would it be possible for you to give rise to conditioned outflows and habits in the future? You have already become a Buddha; can you give rise to ignorance again? Living beings arise from ignorance, you're a Buddha now, but in the future could you become a living being again?" This is what Purna was asking.

His reasoning was this: the mountains, the rivers, the great earth, and everything else arise from ignorance. Before they came into being there was fundamental enlightenment, the wonderful brightness of the enlightened nature, the fundamental enlightenment's bright wonder. Ignorance arose from true enlightenment. Therefore, now that the Buddha has become a Buddha when will he again give rise to ignorance?

After one accomplishes Buddhahood there is no more ignorance. A Bodhisattva at the level of equal enlightenment still has ignorance, but it is slight. In fact, it would be hard to compare it to anything in order to show how little there is of it. Living beings have 84,000 afflictions, which arise from ignorance. But a Bodhisattva of equal enlightenment is comparable to a Buddha,

except that he has not actually reached wonderful enlightenment, that is, Buddhahood. Bodhisattvas of equal enlightenment still have one particle of ignorance which produces appearances that they have not destroyed. And this one particle is comparable to a mote of dust bordering on emptiness.

M2 The Thus Come One explains by analogy which distinguishes true and false.
N1 The false does not reoccur.
O1 Ignorance is basically empty.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Purna, "Consider for example a person who has become confused in a village, mistaking south for north. Is this confusion the result of confusion or of awareness?"

Purna said, "This person's confusion is the result neither of confusion nor of awareness. Why? Confusion is fundamentally baseless, so how could it arise because of confusion? Awareness does not produce confusion, so how could it arise because of awareness?"

Commentary:

The Buddha said to Purna, responding to his question, **"Consider for example a person who has become confused in a village, mistaking south for north."** What was this person's situation? He got turned around. He'd lost his direction. Now in his confusion, when he mistakes south for north, does he in actuality lose south or north? No. South is still south, and north is still north. It's just that the man has lost his sense of direction. **"Is this confusion the result of confusion or of awareness?"** the Buddha asks.

Purna said, "This person's confusion is the result neither of confusion nor of awareness." It's not because of confusion that he gets confused nor is it because of awareness that he gets confused. **"Why? Confusion is fundamentally baseless, so how could it arise because of confusion?"** Confusion doesn't even exist. How

could confusion arise from confusion, when there basically isn't any confusion to begin with? In the same way, basically people have no ignorance, so ignorance is not produced from ignorance. Ignorance is like a shadow. Light represents wisdom, darkness represents stupidity. The ignorance is like a shadow. Our shadow is certainly not our body, but because there is a body, a shadow exists. When people turn their back on enlightenment and unite with defilement, there is ignorance. When they turn their back on defilement and unite with enlightenment, there isn't any more ignorance.

Ignorance is also like a reflection in a mirror. There aren't any reflections in the mirror to begin with, so when a reflection appears, it is obviously not there just because the mirror exists. It appears when there is an appearance external to it. So ignorance does not arise in true enlightenment. The falseness arises relying on the true.

Confusion is fundamentally baseless; it has no root. How, then, can it produce confusion? A plant must have a seed in order to reproduce itself, but confusion has no seed and no root, so confusion can't be born from confusion.

Nor does it arise from awareness. Why? **"Awareness does not produce confusion, so how could it arise because of awareness?"** "Awareness" here refers to enlightenment, and since enlightenment is the opposite of confusion, how could awareness give rise to confusion?

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "If a person who is aware points out the way to the person who is in the midst of confusion, and makes him aware, then do you suppose, Purna, that once the person is over his confusion he could lose his sense of direction again in that village?"

"No, World Honored One."

Commentary:

The village in this analogy represents the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. The confused person represents living beings who have given rise to mistaken perception to false thinking. South and north represent the false and the true, confusion and enlightenment. The confusion of the person in the village represents the arisal of ignorance on the part of living beings.

Now the Buddha says to Purna, **"If a person who is aware points out the way to the person who is in the midst of confusion, and makes him aware…"** The confused person can't tell south from north; he thinks confusion is enlightenment. He's just like people who always think they are right. They see someone and decide he's against them, so they get angry at him. If they think someone else is good to them, they welcome him with open arms. And they think they are right in their opinions. Actually they are upside down. But they don't know that they are upside-down; they don't know that they have mistaken south for north. In that state of con fusion, suppose they encounter someone who makes them aware. The person who is aware represents the Buddha or a Good and Wise Advisor, who says to him, "You're confused and should turn from confusion and return to enlightenment. You think that way is south, but you are mistaken; it is north." He straightens him out about confusion and enlightenment. "**Then do you suppose, Purna, that once the person is over his confusion he could lose his sense of direction again in that village?** After someone has told him the right directions, would he get even more confused?"

"**No, World Honored One.** That is not possible," Purna says. "Once he has been clearly told, he wouldn't get con fused again."

When we are confused, we are just dreaming. But we won't admit we are dreaming. I tell you that you are dreaming right now, but you say, "I'm not asleep and I'm not dreaming. Why do you say I am?" Suppose a person is having a dream that he is Emperor or President or that he's as wealthy as a Rockefeller or a Kennedy. And there he is in the dream with everything he ever wanted –

wealth, riches, status, pleasures, luxuries. He's rich and he's a high official as well and all his relatives are either Ph.D.'s or full professors or members of the upper class. Then someone comes along and say: "You're dreaming." Do you think he'll believe that? Will he admit he's dreaming? No. The person who is dreaming of such wealth and status won't believe he's dreaming. When he wakes up from the dream, though, then he'll know he was just having a good dream, and will regret having awakened so soon. He'll long for the dream to continue.

This is just like people in the world who are busy all day long, running here today and there tomorrow, wondering what the future holds in store for them.

What you haven't got yet,
you want to get.
What you've already got,
you are afraid of losing.

So you get all attached and bound up. When you get enlightened, you wonder how you could have ever been so upside down. However, a person who has become enlightened won't long for his former state of being. That's the difference.

Sutra:

"Purna, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions are the same way. Confusion is groundless and ultimately empty in nature. There had basically been no confusion: it merely seemed as if there were confusion and enlightenment. When the delusion about confusion and enlightenment is ended, enlightenment does not give rise to confusion.

Commentary:

The Buddha now says, **"Purna, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions are the same way."** They are like the man in the village who, in the Buddha's analogy, will not become confused again once he is made aware of the right road. **"Confusion is groundless and ultimately empty in nature."** He won't get

confused again, because confusion has no root, so it can't produce new confusion. Basically there is no confusion, so it doesn't have a nature: and without a nature it is ultimately empty. **"There had basically been no confusion: it merely seemed as if there were confusion and enlightenment.** To seem to be is to not really exist; it is to be empty and false, just as in the case of the person who gets confused about directions: the directions themselves aren't lost; it's just that he doesn't recognize them. **"When the delusion about confusion and enlightenment is ended, enlightenment does not give rise to confusion."** You had a mistaken impression, but once you awaken and recognize the confusion, it ceases to be. As I often say to you:

Don't fear the arisal of your thoughts;
Just fear your enlightenment will be slow in coming.

Everyone has false thoughts – a profusion of them. When this one goes, that one comes. But don't be scared of the arisal of these false thoughts. Just fear that you will be slow in becoming enlightened. Get enlightened quickly: don't be slow about it. When a false thought comes up, you want to pursue it to its origin. Ask who the mother of that false thought is. Where did this false thought arise from? If you find the mother of that false thought, you can tell her to look after her child. Actually, though, that false thought doesn't have a mother, and so there's no one looking after it. When you find out it doesn't have a mother, it won't be naughty any more because it won't even exist. Without a mother, how could it be? When the confusion about enlightenment and confusion is ended, there will be no more confusion. After you become enlightened you won't be able to get confused again. Once you're enlightened, the confusion disappears, and so there can't be any more confusion to arise. Therefore, the Buddha, having already accomplished Buddhahood and cut off ignorance, won't give rise to confusion again.

O2 The manifestation of the myriad dharmas is not real.
P1 He brings up an analogy.

Sutra:

"It is also like a person with an eye-ailment who sees flowers in space. If he gets rid of his eye-ailment, the flowers in space will disappear. If he were so stupid as to quickly return to the spot where the flowers disappeared and wait for them to reappear, would you consider that person to be stupid or smart?"

Commentary:

The confused person is **"also like a person with an eye-ailment who sees flowers in space."** The flowers were beautiful, but they were only there because of the eye-ailment. **"If he gets rid of his eye-ailment, the flowers in space will disappear."** Let me ask you now: do you think there were any flowers in space after all? If you say there weren't any, why did he see flowers? Oh; it was because he had an eye ailment. When his eyes got better, the flowers disappeared. But did they really disappear? "**If he were so stupid as to quickly return to the spot where the flowers disappeared and wait for them to reappear, would you consider that person to be stupid or smart?** If that confused person were to find the place in space where the flowers were last seen and wait there for them to reappear, would you call him stupid or smart, Purna?"

P2 The discussion.

Sutra:

Purna said, "Originally there weren't any flowers in space. It was through a falseness in the seeing that they were produced and extinguished. To see the disappearance of the flowers in space is already upside down. To wait for them to reappear is sheer madness. Why bother to determine further if such a person is stupid or smart?"

Commentary:

The Buddha said, “You are like the person waiting for the flowers to reappear in space. Would you consider that person to be stupid or smart?”

Purna said, “Originally there weren’t any flowers in space. It was through a falseness in the seeing that they were produced and extinguished.” Since no flowers arose, there were no flowers extinguished. For him to wait for the flowers to arise again is a mistake. They were only there in the first place because the eyes were sick. **“To see the disappearance of the flowers in space is already upside down. To wait for them to reappear is sheer madness. Why bother to determine further if such a person is stupid or smart?”** You say he waits for them to come out again? That is just as if I were to plant a flower and then wait for it to come up, just wait there without sleeping or eating. If we were as sincere in our study of the Buddhadharma as he was about waiting for those flowers, we’d probably be successful. But the person waiting for the flowers was sincere about the wrong thing. He was in fact incomparably stupid.

So Purna says, “The man is totally insane. He’s out of his mind. That person isn’t even up to being called stupid.”

P3 Correlates analogy with dharma.

Sutra:

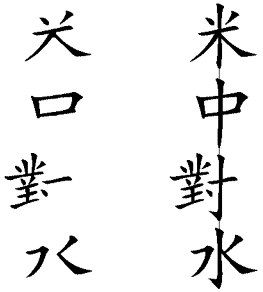
The Buddha said, “Since you explain it that way, why do you ask if the wonderful enlightened bright emptiness can once again give rise to the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth?

Commentary:

So Purna determines that the person waiting for the lowers is insane. The word “insanity” *k’uang* is composed of two characters in Chinese, *k’uang* (行) and *tien* (行). *K’uang* results from excessive *yang*, and *tien* from excessive *yin*. These are the definitions assigned in Chinese medicine. *Yang*, the fire or temper of a person, results in madness when extreme. *Yin*, the lack of fire,

results in another kind of insanity when extreme. To be obsessed with fame is a case of excessive *yang*, and to be obsessed with profit is a case of excessive *yin*. In the whole world there are only two people: one intent upon fame and one intent upon profit. If someone praises the first person and says something like, “You’re so good: intelligent and wise. Everything about you is wonderful,” to him those words of praise are as sweet as candy. The other one, the one seeking profit, thinks of ways to cheat people out of their money. He thinks of every way possible. He’s totally dishonest. For instance, when he sells rice, he adds a little water to it to make it heavier. And if he adds a little water to the beans, they swell, and he has to put fewer in the bag to fill it. So in China there was a rice seller who was struck down by lightning. And on his back they found four characters which no one could decipher until someone added one long stroke down the middle completing the four characters, which read:

He added water to the rice



When the world gets filled with too many evil people, one gets struck down by lightning to serve as an example for the others.

The Buddha said, “Since you explain it that way, why do you ask if the wonderful enlightened bright emptiness can once again give rise to the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth?” Once the Thus Come One has obtained the fruition of the

wonderful enlightened bright emptiness, can he again have the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth arise? Why would you ask that?"

The Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones, are like the confused person whom someone has set straight so that he is no longer confused. So to wonder whether one can again become ignorant once one has been certified as having attained the fruition of Buddhahood, is to be like the person who stands waiting for the flowers to reappear in space. Once one has reached the fruition of Buddhahood, one could not turn around in the Treasury of the Thus Come One, one could not turn around and give rise to ignorance again.

N2 The truth does not change.
O1 He mentions two other analogies.

Sutra:

"It is like a piece of ore containing gold and a mixture of other metals. Once the pure gold is extracted, it will not become an ore again. It is like wood that has been burned to ashes; it will not become wood again.

Commentary:

Another analogy is given to show that after one becomes a Buddha one does not turn into an ordinary living being again. **"It is like a piece of ore containing gold and a mixture of other metals."** The streaks of pure gold are mixed with other substances. With some amount of labor, you can extricate the gold from the ore. "**Once the pure gold is extracted, it will not become an ore again.** The pure gold won't become mixed with sand, silt, or earth again. Also, **it is like wood that has been burned to ashes; it will not become wood again.**" Once the wood is burned, it can't turn back into wood again. The wood can become ashes, but the ashes can't turn directly back into wood.

Sutra:

"The Bodhi and Nirvana of all Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones, are the same way.

Commentary:

All Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions – here two titles of the Buddha have been used together for the sake of literary style. **"The Bodhi and Nirvana are the same way."** "Bodhi" is the fruition of enlightenment, and "Nirvana" has four wonderful virtues. They are just like the pure gold in the mine. When one is still a living being, one is like the unrefined gold in the mine. When one has already become a Buddha, one has turned into pure gold. And pure gold won't get mixed with impurities any more.

One who has become a Buddha is also like the ashes, while living beings are like the wood. Wood can turn into ashes, but ashes can't turn back into wood. The Bodhi and Nirvana of the Buddhas of the ten directions, the fruition of Buddhahood, is like these examples. It cannot change back to what it was before.

CHAPTER 2

The Reason for Perfect Penetration

K2 Then the Buddha speaks of the empty-not-empty Treasury of the Thus Come One to explain the reason for perfect penetration.
L1 He answers and then asks a question.
Ml He reiterates the doubt about the elements.
N1 He restates Purna's doubt.

Sutra:

"Purna, you also asked whether the natures of water and fire would not destroy each other if the natures of earth, water, fire, and wind were all perfectly fused and pervaded the Dharma Realm, and whether subtle emptiness and the great earth would not be incompatible if both pervaded the Dharma Realm.

Commentary:

"**Purna, you also asked whether the natures of water and fire would not destroy each other if the natures of earth, water, fire, and wind were all perfectly fused and pervaded the Dharma Realm.** You say, 'here there's water, there can't be fire, and where there's fire there can't be water. The natures of water and fire are not compatible.'"

You should know that water, fire, and every other thing has a nature, although it may not be capable of thought. Put you can't see

this nature with the ordinary flesh eyes. When it’s already become fire, we can see it, but before it becomes fire there is still a nature there. The same is true of water. This nature is contained within the Dharma Realm. It pervades the Dharma Realm. By use of the sun you can obtain fire, and by use of the moon you can obtain water, because the nature of those elements exists in emptiness. You see emptiness as empty, but it is actually replete with all appearances. And emptiness is just the Dharma Realm. Purna doubts, however, that the nature of both fire and water can pervade the Dharma Realm.

“Purna, you also wonder **whether subtle emptiness and the great earth would not be incompatible if both pervaded the Dharma Realm**. ‘Emptiness is emptiness,’ you reason, ‘and if there is emptiness, there shouldn’t be earth. The earth is a solid object, so there shouldn’t be any emptiness where it is. If emptiness pervades the Dharma Realm, earth shouldn’t. If earth pervades the Dharma Realm, then emptiness shouldn’t.”’ The Buddha reiterates Purna’s doubt.

N2 An analogy clarifies the appearance of the nature.

Sutra:

“For example, Purna, the substance of emptiness is not the myriad things, and yet it does not prevent the inclusion of all appearances within it.

Commentary:

“There is an analogy to explain this principle, Purna. **For example, Purna, the substance of emptiness is not the myriad things, and yet it does not prevent the inclusion of all appearances within it.** It is basically empty of anything, but though its own substance has no appearance whatever, it does not oppose the natural arising of all things.”

Sutra:

“Do you know the reason why? Purna, the empty space is bright on a sunny day, and dark when the sky is cloudy. It

moves when the wind rises up, it is fresh when the sky clears. It is turbid and hazy when the weather is foul, it is obscure when a dust-storm breaks out. It casts a bright reflection on a pool of clear water.

Commentary:

"Do you know the reason why? Purna, the empty space is bright on a sunny day, and dark when the sky is cloudy. It moves when the wind rises up, it is fresh when the sky clears." This refers to the time right after a rain when everything is sparkling clean. **It is turbid and hazy when the weather is foul, it is obscure when a dust-storm breaks out. It casts a bright reflection on a pool of clear water.**" So in the great void, there are no appearances, but the appearances are allowed to appear at will, with no resistance on the part of emptiness. The same thing occurs in the Treasury of the Thus Come One, which is also basically devoid of appearances. And yet the seven elements, the five skandhas, the six sense organs, the twelve places, and the eighteen realms are all in the Treasury of the Thus Come One, and it does not resist the arising of those appearances.

N3 He questions and explains about the falseness of appearances.

Sutra:

"What do you think of these conditions which come into existence at different places? Are they created from these conditions themselves or do they find their origin in emptiness? If they arise from those conditions, Purna, then on a sunny day since the sun is bright, all the worlds of the ten directions should take the form of the sun. Then how does it happen that on a sunny day one still sees the round sun in the sky? If emptiness is bright, emptiness itself should shine. How does it happen that when there is a covering of clouds and fog there is no light in evidence?

Commentary:

"Purna, what is your opinion about this? "**What do you think of these conditions which come into existence at different places? Are they created from these conditions themselves or do they find their origin in emptiness? If they arise from those conditions, Purna –** if the seven appearances arise of themselves, **then** let's take the sun as an example. **On a sunny day since the sun is bright, all the worlds of the ten directions should take the form of the sun.** All the lands and countries should look like the sun and have the ability to shine. **Then how does it happen that on a sunny day one still sees the round sun in the sky?** Moreover, **if emptiness is bright, emptiness itself should shine.** If the light is not produced from the sun, but from emptiness, then emptiness should be innately bright. **How does it happen that when there is a covering of clouds and fog there is no light in evidence?** Emptiness doesn't give off light or have the ability to shine."

Sutra:

"You should know that brightness is not the sun, is not emptiness, and is not other than the emptiness and the sun.

Commentary:

"You should know Purna, that the function of **brightness is not the sun**, it doesn't necessarily come from the sun. Nor does it necessarily come from **emptiness**. But it's also the case that it doesn't necessarily not come from **emptiness and the sun**. It is not **other than** they. Ultimately where does it come from? It comes from the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One."

N4 He correlates the analogy with the dharma.

Sutra:

"The truly wonderful enlightened brightness is the same way. If your karma finds expression in emptiness, then emptiness will appear. If your karma finds expression in one or another of earth, water, fire, or wind, that one will appear. If your karma finds expression in them all, they will all appear.

Commentary:

“**The truly wonderful enlightened brightness**, the pure nature and bright substance of the everlasting true mind, **is the same way. If your karma finds expression in emptiness, then emptiness will appear. If your karma finds expression in one or another of earth, water, fire, or wind, that one will appear.** If you have created the causes to bring about one or another of the elements of earth, water, fire, or wind, then the element you have created will appear. **If your karma finds expression in them all, they will all appear.**” For instance, a person might obtain fire from the sun and water from a pearl at the same time.

Sutra:

“How can they all appear? Suppose, Purna, the sun’s reflection appears in a single body of water, and two people gaze at it, both at the same time. Then one person walks east and the other walks west. Each person, still looking in the water, will see a sun go along with him, one to the east, one to the west, seemingly without there being any fixed direction for the movement of the sun’s reflection.

Commentary:

“**How can they all appear? Suppose, Purna, the sun’s reflection appears in a single body of water, and two people gaze at it, both at the same time.** If the water is clear, the sun’s reflection can appear in it. The people see a single reflection of the sun in the water. **Then one person walks east and the other walks west. Each person, still looking in the water, will see a sun go along with him, one to the east, one to the west.** When the two stood together, they saw one sun. When they parted, there were two suns, one accompanying each of them, **seemingly without there being any fixed direction for the movement of the sun’s reflection.** Which is true then? Which is false? These two suns appear unexpectedly. No one anticipated there would be more than one.”

Sutra:

“You shouldn’t belabor the question and say, ‘if there is one sun, how can it follow both people? Since the sun is double, why does only one appear in the sky?’ This is just to revolve in falseness, because it cannot be proved.

Commentary:

“**You shouldn’t** start arguing the point and **belabor the question and say, ‘if there is one sun, how can it follow both people? Since the sun is double, why does only one appear in the sky?’** To get caught up like this **is just to revolve in falseness, because it cannot be proved.** There’s no foundation in fact. You may say it’s one, but how can it follow both people? You may want to say it’s two, but basically there isn’t even one. How could there be two? Even the one is empty and false.” So the whole argument is baseless.

N5 He explains the meaning to resolve his doubt.

Sutra:

“Contemplate the fundamental falseness of appearances. They are just like flowers that are conjured up in space and produce empty fruit. Why, then, investigate the meaning of their formation and disappearance?

Commentary:

“When you look at appearances, **contemplate** their **fundamental falseness**.” It’s all like the sun’s reflection in water, just mentioned. There was, an appearance, but it was illusory. The one sun became two. How did the change take place? When did it divide? You can’t see it clearly. One person sees only one sun, but it follows him. The same thing happens to the other person. And you can’t point out and explain clearly exactly how those appearances come into being. “**They are just like flowers that are conjured up in space and produce empty fruit. Why, then, investigate the meaning of their formation and disappearance?**

How can you determine that earth, water, fire, and wind overcome one another? How can you ask about their mutual destruction?”

Sutra:

“Contemplate the fundamental truth of the nature. It is solely the wonderful enlightened brightness, the wonderful enlightened bright mind. Originally, it is neither water nor fire. Why, then, ask about incompatibility?

Commentary:

“Contemplate the fundamental truth of the nature. It is solely the wonderful enlightened brightness, the wonderful enlightened bright mind.” These two phrases refer to the same thing, the second is just added for the sake of literary style. So the wonderful enlightened mind, **“Originally, it is neither water nor fire.”** Although it is not either of these, it contains them both. The Treasury of the Thus Come One is replete with that kind of functioning, but it doesn’t originally manifest as water and fire. It is just the nature of water and fire. “**Why, then, ask about incompatibility?** You still don’t understand the principle of contemplating the nature, so you ask about the mutual destruction of the appearances of water and fire. You don’t know that the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One is complete with all the myriad dharmas and their functionings. You only know how to see the physical aspect of things, which, although it exists, is basically false. It is just like the one reflection of the sun which split in two and followed each person. Was it real? No. And that’s the way all appearances are.”

M2 He completes his discussion of the three aspects of the Treasury of the Thus Come One and exhorts him to cultivate.
N1 Ultimate disclosure of the perfect fusion.
O1 The mind in confusion and enlightenment is faced with the arising of conditions.
P1 Based on the arising of defiled conditions there is obstructive existence.

Sutra:

“Purna, you think that form and emptiness overcome and destroy one another in the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

Thus the Treasury of the Thus Come One accordingly appears to you as form and emptiness throughout the Dharma Realm.

Commentary:

“Purna, you think that form and emptiness overcome and destroy one another in the Treasury of the Thus Come One.” “You” here does not just refer to Purna. It refers to you and me and everyone here investigating the *Shurangama Sutra*. You think that form and emptiness are incompatible and that they battle with one another and destroy one another in the Treasury of the Thus Come One. **“Thus the Treasury of the Thus Come One accordingly appears to you as form and emptiness throughout the Dharma Realm.”** Since that’s what you think, that’s what happens throughout the Dharma Realm.

Sutra:

“And so, within it the wind moves, emptiness is still, the sun is bright, and the clouds are dark. The reason for this lies in the delusion of living beings who have turned their backs on enlightenment and joined with the ‘dust.’ Thus, the wearisome defilements come into being and mundane appearances exist.

Commentary:

“And so” – since form and emptiness continually over come one another in the Treasury of the Thus Come One, there arises the function of according with conditions. Be cause of this, form and emptiness come into being, and their appearance and functioning pervade the Dharma Realm. **“Within it**, within the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, **the wind moves, emptiness is still, the sun is bright, and the clouds are dark. The reason for this lies in the delusion of living beings.”** In the midst of so many appearances, living beings become muddled and unclear. They don’t understand the principle of true emptiness, and so they are muddled. Therefore, in the true emptiness of the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, they give rise to the three subtle delusions and the six coarse delusions.

One unenlightened thought produces the
three subtle appearances;
States become the conditions for the growth
of the six coarse appearances.

As I explained above, the three subtle appearances are the appearance of karma, the appearance of turning, and the appearance of manifestation. The six coarse appearances are the appearance of knowing, the appearance of continuity, the appearance of grasping, the appearance of reckoning names, the appearance of the arisal of karma, and the appearance of suffering bound to karma. When living beings give rise to these appearances, they are confused. Once confused, they **"turned their backs on enlightenment and joined with the 'dust.'"** They turn away from the true nature and get involved with the experiences of the six sense-objects. And this is all because they think that in the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One there is mutual incompatibility. Since they turn their backs on enlightenment and get mixed up with defilements, **"The wearisome defilements come into being and mundane appearances exist."** The mountains, the rivers, the great earth, and the continuity of the world come into being.

P2 Based on the arising of pure conditions, there is unobstructed fusion.

Sutra:

"With the wonderful brightness that is not extinguished and not produced, I unite with the Treasury of the Thus Come One. Thus the Treasury of the Thus Come One is the unique and wonderful enlightened brightness which completely illumines the Dharma Realm.

Commentary:

"**With the wonderful brightness**, the wonderfully en lightened bright mind, **that is not extinguished and not produced, I" –** here the Buddha is referring to himself **– "unite with the Treasury of the Thus Come One. Thus the Treasury of the Thus Come One is the unique and wonderful enlightened brightness –** there is

only the wonderfully enlightened bright mind – **which completely illumines the Dharma Realm**, shining on absolutely every place."

Sutra:

"That is why, within it, the one is limitless; the limitless is one. In the small appears the great; in the great appears the small.

Commentary:

"In the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, **the one is limitless; the limitless is one.** One is all and all is one. **In the small appears the great; in the great appears the small.**" Great and small are unobstructed; one and many are unhindered. You can also say that the one represents the Treasury of the Thus Come One, which can manifest the myriad dharmas. And the myriad dharmas all return to the Treasury of the Thus Come One. "The one" can also refer to the one mind, in that the myriad dharmas are all from the mind. The mind contains the myriad dharmas. The True Mind is the Treasury of the Thus Come One, the Treasury of the Thus Come One is the True Mind. You can't use the limited knowledge of ordinary people to reflect upon the subtle, wonderful, enlightened bright mind, with its inconceivable transformations. You'll never totally understand it that way.

Sutra:

"Unmoving in the Bodhimanda, yet pervading the ten directions, my body contains the ten directions and endless emptiness. On the tip of a single hair appear the lands of the Jeweled Kings. Sitting in a mote of dust, I turn the great Dharma wheel, destroy the defilements, and unite with enlightenment, so, true suchness, the wonderful enlightened bright nature, comes into being.

Commentary:

"Unmoving in the Bodhimanda, yet pervading the ten directions." This phrase refers to the Buddha's Dharma Body in the Bodhimanda which does not move but goes to all countries in

the ten directions. **"My body contains the ten directions and endless emptiness."** Not only does it pervade all Buddhalands, it even fills up empty space.

"Well, if empty space is filled up, does it then cease to be empty? Does it wipe out empty space? Does it obliterate emptiness?" No. What pervades the ten directions and endless emptiness is the Dharma Body, which has no appearance.

"On the tip of a single hair appear the lands of the Jeweled Kings." This is truly an inexpressibly wonderful state. All the Buddhas' lands appear in a single hair. This is "the dependent appearing in the proper." The body is the "proper retribution." The Buddhalands are the "de pendent retribution." So, in the smallest division of the proper retribution – a single hair – appears the largest division of the dependent retribution – the Buddhalands. In the small appears the great.

"Sitting in a mote of dust, I turn the great Dharma wheel." Here the "mote of dust" refers to a "mote of dust bordering on emptiness," which is one seventh of the smallest division of the dependent retribution. In it appears the great – the Buddha's body, as he turns the Dharma Wheel to teach and transform living beings. Thus, in the small appears the great, and in the great appears the small. Ultimately how can it be like this? It is the wonderful functioning of the Buddhadharma, a glimpse of the Buddha-nature.

Another example of the great appearing in the small is when we hold up a mirror to reflect miles and miles of scenery. In order to know about this state, you have to understand the principle of the unobstructedness and perfect fusion of noumena and phenomena. It's just what is meant by "the one being limitless and the limitless one," which was discussed above. It also pertains to the meaning of dharani, which is "to gather in all dharmas and hold all meanings." And, where does this gathering occur? In the Buddha-nature. After you hear more Sutras, you will naturally come to understand this principle. This doctrine is so inexpressibly wonderful that I'm not going to say any more about it now.

The Buddha says that, sitting in a mote of dust, he turns the great Dharma Wheel. Someone with virtue in the Way can turn the Dharma Wheel to teach and transform living beings in all three realms – the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the realm of formlessness. When you don't see him, he may sometimes be in the heavens teaching living beings by lecturing the Sutras and speaking Dharma. Sometimes he may be in the hells, lecturing Sutras and speaking Dharma to teach living beings. Sometimes he goes into a mote of dust to turn the Dharma Wheel in order to teach and transform living beings. Although a mote of dust is small, the living beings within it are no fewer than the number of living beings in this world. This state is in conceivable and inexpressible. To describe it in words is just to reveal its superficial aspects.

Why do living beings have to be living beings? Be cause they are plagued with the wearisomeness of defilement. They "turn their backs on enlightenment and unite with defilement." The Buddhas have been able to **"destroy the defilements, and unite with enlightenment, so, true suchness, the wonderful enlightened bright nature, comes into being."** Our true mind is the Treasury of the Thus Come One – these are different names for the same thing.

O2 The inherent mind is faced with the perfect nature of the treasury of the Thus Come One.

P1 In the perfection of the empty treasury, everything is non-existent.

Sutra:

"The Treasury of the Thus Come One is the fundamental, wonderful, perfect mind.

Commentary:

It's also called the Treasury of the Thus Come One and the fundamental, wonderful, perfect Mind. Basically wonderful, perfect, and pure, it pervades the Dharma Realm. It is so great that there is nothing beyond it and so small that there is nothing within it. This fundamental, wonderful, perfect Mind is different from any dharma. In what way?

Sutra:

"It is not the mind, nor emptiness, nor earth, nor water, nor wind, nor fire; it is not the eyes, nor the ears, the nose, the tongue, the body, or the mind. It is not form, nor sound, smells, tastes, objects of touch, or dharmas. It is not the realm of eye-consciousness, nor any other, up to and including the realm of mind-consciousness.

Commentary:

"It is not the mind, nor emptiness, nor earth, nor water, nor wind, nor fire." It's not any of the four elements; they are all empty. This is called "making all conditioned dharmas empty." **"It is not the eyes, nor the ears, the nose, the tongue, the body, or the mind."** It is not the five skandhas or the six sense-organs. **"It is not form, nor sound, smells, tastes, objects of touch, or dharmas."** The six sense-objects also are done away with. This is similar to the passage in the *Heart Sutra* which says, "There are... no eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind, no forms, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, or dharmas no realm of eye-consciousness, up to and including no realm of mind-consciousness; and no ignorance or ending of ignorance, up to and including no old age and death or ending of old age and death. There is no suffering, no accumulating, no extinction, no Way, and no understanding and no attaining." The difference is that the *Heart Sutra* says "there is no," and the passage here in the *Shurangama Sutra* says "it is not." "It is not" implies that it might be something else; here it says, "it is not," but later it says, "it is."

It is not the realm of eye-consciousness, nor any other, up to and including the realm of mind-consciousness. It is not the consciousness of the eyes, or of the ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind. Our fundamental, wonderful, perfect Mind is none of these. The Buddha has already discussed all of them – the six entrances, the five skandhas, the twelve places, the eighteen realms – and he said that they were the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. Now he says they are not. He has explained them to the point

that everyone is confused, and no one knows what to think. He says they are, and he says they are not. Ultimately, are they or aren't they? There isn't any "is" or "is not." Don't worry. They neither are nor are not. That's Buddhadharma. There is no "is" and no "is not."

Sutra:

"It is not understanding, nor ignorance, nor the ending of understanding or ignorance, nor any other, up to and including old age and death and the ending of old age and death.

Commentary:

The Buddha swept away the Dharma, as he spoke it. When the Buddha was about to enter Nirvana, someone asked him, "Buddha, how are we to propagate the Dharma you have spoken?"

What do you suppose the Buddha replied? He said, "I haven't spoken any Dharma." Now you shouldn't think from his answer that the Buddha had become slightly eccentric as he neared '-is death. That's not the case. He said, "Who ever says that I spoke a single word slanders the Buddha. I never said a single word."

So he spoke Dharma for forty-nine years and held over three hundred assemblies but didn't speak a single word! How can that be? Basically, the Buddha spoke all Dharmas, but after he finished speaking them, they disappeared. That's what's called,

Sweep away all dharmas,
And separate from all appearances.

It was to teach people not to be attached to Dharma. It was to keep people from saying, "I should affix myself to the Dharmas the Buddha spoke." If people did that, they could not obtain the emptiness of dharmas. You want it to be that people are empty and dharmas are empty. So now, in this passage, the Buddha negates everything he has said.

You say, "I've obtained the emptiness of people and dharmas, and so all I do from morning to night is sleep. I don't study anything at all. People are empty, after all, so I just go to sleep."

But, then you've still got "sleep." When even sleep is gone, that really is emptiness. If there's still sleep, it's not emptiness. You want to make the attachments to self and dharmas totally empty. The *Vajra Sutra* says that the Dharma the Thus Come One spoke is like a raft. Imagine how tired you would get if you were to hoist the raft on your back and carry it with you once it has taken you across the river. The raft simply serves to get you across the water. You have to relinquish it once you are across. In the same way, the Dharma's purpose is to extinguish our afflictions. Once the afflictions are gone, we don't need any dharmas. Before your afflictions are gone, you can't do without the Dharma. If you reject the Dharma at that stage, your afflictions will just increase.

Afflictions are endless;
I vow to cut them off.
Dharma-doors are limitless;
I vow to study them all.

We study the Dharma-doors in order to cut off afflictions. Now let me tell you some true Buddhadharma. You have to cut off your afflictions. If you study the Dharma for thousands ¡f years and don't cut off your afflictions, it is the same as if you had not studied.

"How do I cut off my afflictions?" you wonder. Just didn't be turned around by the situations and states of mind that come your way. If you are not influenced by situations and states of mind, you have some samadhi-power. That's Buddhadharma '

"Why do you say that the Buddhadharma has no 'is' or 'is not?'"

The Sixth Patriarch told us:

Basically there is nothing at all.
Where can the dust alight?

And so these dharmas are negated.

If you can understand that the Buddhadharma has no “is” or “is not,” you can become enlightened. The Sixth Patriarch asked Hui Ming, “When there is no thought of good and no thought of evil, what is the senior-seated Ming’s original face?” “No thought of good” is the case of there being no “is.” “No thought of evil” is the case of there being no “is not.” Apply your effort to the point where there is no “is” and no “is not” – no “right” and no “wrong” – and try to figure out what kind of state that is. The absence of “is” and “is not” – of “right” and “wrong” – is itself the inherent Buddha-nature, the fundamental, wonderful, perfect Mind. If you obtain that, then you have every thing, and you also don’t have anything; but, it isn’t like your present attachment to that state. When you have every thing, what do you have? You have all the Dharma-gems in the Treasury of the Thus Come One. You don’t have anything at all; this means you don’t have any affliction. There are as many afflictions as there are Dharma-gems in the Treasury of the Thus Come One. Why haven’t you obtained those Dharma-gems? Because you have too much affliction, and there is no place in your stomach for so many things. Thus, if you have a lot of affliction, you have only a little Dharma-water – a small Dharma-nature. If your afflictions change, they themselves are the Dharma-water; they are your Dharma-nature.

Don’t fear that you have too big a temper. The bigger your temper, the greater your Dharma-nature. But, don’t keep letting it turn into temper, because if you do that, you counteract your own intelligence. You start out smart and end up stupid if you do that. The Buddhadharma teaches you to cut off your afflictions, and then the afflictions become Bodhi, just as ice melts into water. When water freezes, the ice is your afflictions; when it melts, it becomes Bodhi. There’s nothing so terribly difficult about it. All you have to do is change and you can be successful.

“It is not understanding – it’s not enlightenment **– nor ignorance –** not the falseness that arises from the one truth **– nor the ending of understanding or ignorance, nor any other, up to and including old age and death and the ending of old age and**

death." The Dharmas of the Twelve Conditioned Causes are also made empty.

The Dharma now being explained is the empty Treasury of the Thus Come One. Next, the Treasury of the Thus Come One which is empty and yet not empty will be explained. So you see, the Treasury of the Thus Come One is not just one simple thing; it has these several distinctions. You can't just know a single term in the Buddhadharma and assume that you understand it all. You may know only about the Treasury of the Thus Come One, but you must also make empty the Treasury of the Thus Come One, and know the Treasury of the Thus Come One which is not empty, and then you have to realize the Treasury of the Thus Come One which is empty and yet not empty. A lot of trouble?

Sutra:

"It is not suffering, nor accumulation, nor extinction, nor the way. It is neither knowing nor attaining.

Commentary:

In this world there are many kinds of **suffering**. First, there are Three Sufferings; there are also Eight Sufferings. The Three Sufferings are the suffering within suffering, the suffering of decay, and the suffering of process. Suffering within suffering is experienced by poor people. For example, poverty itself is a kind of suffering, and it becomes suffering within suffering when someone who is poor gets sick and has no money to see a doctor. Or, perhaps a poor person lives in a broken-down hut, and suddenly the rainy season hits. Living in the hut was suffering enough, but with the rain leaking in everywhere, there isn't much difference between being inside the hut and outside.

When I was in Hong Kong, I lived in a room that leaked when it rained. Above my bed alone were six holes where the rain poured in. Wouldn't you say that was suffering? Although it was suffering, I did not repair the leaks in my own roof. When I had a little money, I wanted to use it to help other people. That's the kind of stupid person I was. During that time, I gave $1,500 to help sponsor the

carving of Buddha-images for a temple that was being established. I could have repaired my roof for about $200, but I couldn't bear to use the money to fix my own roof. I wanted to help make the Buddha-images for that other temple. And people think, "That person doesn't know how to keep books. He can't separate his own business from other people's."

Suffering within suffering occurs when someone has to endure poverty, and then in addition to being penniless, he can't even get any clothing or food. Or, someone who has no money suddenly learns of the death of his father and can't afford to buy him a coffin. I had that experience also. When my mother died, I was at her side, but I didn't have a cent in my pocket. The coffin had to be purchased, but what was I to do? When I talked it over with my brothers, we all looked at one another, no one was able to do it. I said, "Well, if you can't manage it, I will go ask a friend to help." Fortunately, I had some friends whom I investigated the Buddhadharma with, and among those friends was one who sold coffins. When I told him my mother had died, he immediately said, "No problem. You select any kind of casket you want. I don't need any money now. You can pay me when you get it. Not only that, I'll give you $5,000 on loan for you to use now." Because I ordinarily liked to help people, there were people who wanted to help me when something of mine came up. But, that experience was another example of suffering within suffering.

From the moment my mother was buried, I really put everything down. I paid no attention to the fact that I was in debt. I just stayed by the grave to practice filial piety.

The suffering of decay happens to wealthy people. Originally they are wealthy, and then somehow or other their wealth is destroyed. Suppose, for example, some people make a lot of money and hide the bills in their house instead of putting the money in the bank. Then, their house catches on fire, and the whole wad burns up. Or, maybe their gold is stolen by thieves. Or, maybe you're so attached to your money that you carry it everywhere with you,

never able to part with it, until one day you're not careful and you lose it all.

Then there is the suffering of the life-process. Al though you don't undergo the suffering within suffering as those who are poor do, and you don't undergo the suffering of decay as those who are wealthy do, you still have the suffering of passing from childhood to adolescence to middle age to old age to death. This process flows on continually without cease, and it is also suffering. Those are the Three Sufferings.

The first of the Eight Sufferings is birth. When a child comes into the world, the only thing it can do is cry[1]. The child can't express itself clearly yet, but its crying indicates suffering. The pain of birth is like the pain a live tortoise would feel if its shell were ripped away. When the infant first comes in contact with the air, its pain is extreme.

The second of the Eight Sufferings is old age. When people get old, they lose the use of their eyes, ears, hands, and legs. They can't get around, and their food is taste less. When old age comes, the whole physical mechanism starts to break down. That's why old people get cranky and cross. They are just about like children, so you can't blame them for their behavior.

The third is the suffering of sickness. The things of this world may seem unjust, but sickness is very fair toward all. No matter whether one is rich or poor, of honorable or lowly birth, one will feel the discomfort of sickness when it strikes. The fourth suffering is death, which is also just, in regard to everyone. The time will come when every one must die, no matter who it is.

The fifth is the suffering of being apart from those you love. Everyone knows what love is, but people don't realize that there is suffering in love – the suffering of being apart from those you love. No matter how much you may love a person, the time may come

1. the Chinese character for "cry" is *k'u* (哭), a homonym for the one for "suffering."

when you have to leave him. Some circumstances will arise that make parting necessary, and that is suffering.

The sixth is the suffering of being together with those you hate. You really dislike a certain type of person, but you meet up with just that kind of person no matter where you 90.

The seventh is the suffering of not getting what you seek. You want something, and you can't get it; that is also suffering.

The last is the suffering of the blaze of the five skandhas. Forms, feelings, thoughts, activities, and consciousness are a raging blaze.

In this passage, the Buddha says that the Treasury of the Thus Come One is none of the Four Truths – neither suffering, **nor accumulation, nor extinction, nor the Way.** Accumulation refers to affliction, and extinction refers to the Principle of certification to Nirvana. Nor is it the Way. **It is neither knowing nor attaining.** Even wisdom becomes empty. It is not the attaining to some level of fruition. This is the emptiness of the Treasury of the Thus Come One; there is nothing in it at all.

Sweep away all dharmas,
And separate from all appearances.

Speaking of "extinction," I recall something that happened when Shakyamuni Buddha was practicing the Bodhisattva Way. When Shakyamuni Buddha was on the causal ground – that is, when he was cultivating the Way, before he became a Buddha – he met a rakshasa ghost who said:

All activities are impermanent
characterized by production and extinction.

He said just this one sentence, these two phrases, and did not say any more. Shakyamuni Buddha recognized it as Buddhadharma and said, "Brother ghost, you were just reciting a verse that was

Buddhadharma, but you spoke only two lines of it. There must be two more lines. Can you tell me what they are?"

The ghost said, "You want to hear poetry, but I'm hungry right now. I haven't eaten in ever so long. I'd like to recite the verse for you, but I haven't the strength." Shakyamuni Buddha asked him, "What do you want to eat? can prepare something for you."

The ghost said, "You can't prepare what I eat."

"Why not?"

"Because I eat human flesh, and there isn't anyone else around here now. Even if there were, you wouldn't have the right to offer him to me to eat."

Shakyamuni Buddha said, "Ah, so that's how it is. Well, finish speaking that Dharma for me, and I'11 offer you my self to eat. You can eat me."

"Can you really give up your life?" the ghost asked.

"For the sake of the Dharma, I forget my own life. Of course, I can give it up," said the Buddha. "So speak up. And, when you've finished, you can eat."

"Are you cheating me?" said the ghost, eyeing him closely. "After I speak the Dharma, will you change your mind and be unable to relinquish your own life to make my meal?"

"Absolutely not," the Buddha said. "Don't worry. After you speak the Dharma, and once I remember it clearly, I will let you eat me."

So the rakshasa ghost said the last two lines of the verse:

When production and extinction are extinguished,
That still extinction is bliss.

Then the Rakshasa ghost said, "All right, I've spoken the Dharma. Let me eat you."

Shakyamuni Buddha said, "Wait a minute. Don't eat me yet."

"See?" said the ghost. "I knew you'd back out. But, it won't work. I'll have to become impolite with you."

"I'm not backing out," said the Buddha. "Wait until I write the four lines of verse down, and then you can eat me. Then, even though I will be gone, I'll have preserved this Dharma so that others who come after me can rely on I in their cultivation. So, wait a minute."

"Fine," said the ghost. "Start writing."

The Buddha carved the verse into the bark of a tree.

As soon as the ghost saw he had finished, he said, "Now I can eat you, right?"

"Wait a bit longer," said the Buddha.

"You've carved it in the tree, and people who come along can read it. What more do you want? What are we waiting for now?"

The Buddha said, "I don't think that the carving in the tree will last long. Wait a bit while I carve the verse in a rock. Then it will last forever. Then you can eat me."

"Sure," said the ghost. "You've got a lot of excuses. You're just procrastinating. But, do as you like."

Shakyamuni Buddha found a way to carve the verse in a stone. Then he said invitingly to the ghost, "I'm finished. I've done what I needed to do. You can eat me now."

The Rakshasa ghost said, "Really? You can really let me eat you?" So he opened his mouth as if to take a bite, but he suddenly ascended into empty space and went to the heavens. He was actually a god who had come to test Shakyamuni Buddha to see just how sincere he really was about the Dharma. And Shakyamuni Buddha proved himself. He was able to forget his own life for the sake of the Dharma. He could sacrifice his life in order to preserve the Buddhadharma. In the past, the Buddha renounced his life for half a verse.

Look at us now. We listen to the Sutras and hear Dharma, but we don't understand it very well, so we think it better to rest. See how lazy we are! Why did Shakyamuni Buddha become a Buddha? It was because he could forget about himself for the sake of the Dharma. He would disregard everything else for the sake of the Dharma; he didn't want anything. If you are really sincere about the Dharma, you will seek it so sincerely that you will be able to drop everything – even things you thought it impossible to do without.

A few days ago, a disciple of mine called me four or five times long-distance from New York. He is very unusual. He always wants to see me. He was about thirteen when he took refuge with me. Before that, he had had some strange experiences. Although he was young, he had heart disease. The doctors prescribed five years of complete bed-rest. He was not to get up at all; he wasn't supposed to walk even a few feet. It was during that period that he saw a photograph of me. While his relatives and friends recited "Namo Amitabha Buddha," he would recite one of my names: "Namo Dharma Master To Lun." Namo means to offer up one's life in reverence. He'd recite sitting in full lotus on his bed. His sincerity was unusual for such a small child, and he kept up that recitation for more than seventy days. Then he saw the photograph turn into a live person who stretched out his hand and rubbed the boy on the crown of his head. After that, his heart disease and all the symptoms of his illness disappeared. At that time he'd never even met me. This may sound like a tall tale, but it was his own personal experience. After he was cured, he came to my temple to meet me. He took refuge, and then sat in meditation. I didn't usually teach meditation when I was in Hong Kong. If someone wanted to investigate Ch'an, they did it on their own. So he did. He went to school, and during recess or breaks from classes he would go off into the hills to meditate, or even into the bathroom – wherever he could find a place. After about a year, he opened his Buddha-eye, and he then understood extremely clearly all manner of things that were going on.

Another strange thing happened with this same disciple. He was always very short – probably because of his earlier illness. But, his English was good, and when Americans came to visit me, I would have him translate for me. Despite his fluent English, though, Americans didn't take him seriously because they saw he was such a small child. So, one day I said to him, "Hurry up and grow up! You're so short that everyone thinks of you as just a kid, and no matter how eloquent you are, they don't take you seriously." He was very obedient. He went home, and in one week grew three inches. Now he's taller than I am.

A few days ago he called me and wanted me to come to New York to see him. But, because I was lecturing the Sutra for all of you, I told him I couldn't come, even though he wanted to see me very badly. "I'm lecturing the Sutras now," I said, "and I can't abandon a whole group of people just because one person wants to see me. If you really want to see me, come to San Francisco."

He decided to come to San Francisco, but then found that he didn't have enough time. So yesterday he called to tell me he was leaving. If it weren't for lecturing the *Shurangama Sutra*, if it weren't for the sake of the Dharma, I would really like to see that disciple of mine. He has a lot of faith in me and really knows a lot of Buddhadharma.

When I was in Hong Kong, he used to translate my lectures into Cantonese. And he was so in tune with me that if I said just one sentence, he could pick up on it and explain the entire meaning. People objected and said, "The Abbot didn't say all that; what's he doing talking so much?" Actually I had told him to explain all that he was explaining. Because he had the Buddha-eye, he knew that I was telling him to explain the principles in detail. What he would say is the same as what I would have said, and so I was a little lazy and let him do the talking.

Sutra:

"It is not Dana, nor Shila, nor Virya, nor Kshanti, nor Dhyana, nor Prajna, nor Paramita.

Commentary:

In the empty Treasury of the Thus Come One, the Six Perfections are also emptied. In the previous passage, the Four Truths were said to be empty. Immediately after his enlightenment, the Buddha explained the Four Truths and their three turnings. The emptying of the Four Truths and Twelve Causal Conditions makes the Dharmas of the Sound-Hearers and the Condition-Enlightened Ones empty. Now the emptying of the Six Perfections makes the Dharmas of the Bodhisattvas empty.

The first of the Six Perfections is **Dana**, Sanskrit for giving. There are three kinds of giving: giving of wealth, giving of Dharma, and giving of fearlessness. In giving wealth, one gives material objects to people in order to help them out. Lecturing Sutras and speaking Dharma is an example of giving Dharma. Giving of fearlessness occurs when someone is afraid of something and you think of a way to comfort him so that he isn't frightened any more.

The next is **Shila**, Sanskrit for "precepts." There are the five precepts, the eight precepts, the ten precepts, the two hundred and fifty precepts for bhikshus, and the three hundred and forty-eight precepts for bhikshunis. There are also the ten major and forty-eight minor Bodhisattva precepts.

Kshanti is Sanskrit for "patience." We say we study Buddhadharma, and it's not that difficult to learn the concepts. What is difficult is to put the concepts into practice. The way some people study patience is to tell others to be patient with them, so that they will have no need to be patient with others. So they say to other people who are not patient with them, "You have studied so much of the Buddhadharma, you should have more patience. Why do you get so upset when I say just one thing to you?" They blame others for not being patient, but they can't be patient themselves. And how do they rationalize it? "I understand the Buddhadharma: I am supposed to be without a self. So I don't have any patience. I don't have the view that there's a self, so when it's time to be patient, it's

you who should be patient, not me." But, when it's time to eat, they remember they are not supposed to have any view that there are people, so they think they don't have to give anyone else anything to eat. When there's work to be done, or when they're in a difficult spot, they remember that they are not supposed to have the view that there is a self, so they say they don't have to take care of such things. And, if they kill someone, they say, "It doesn't matter, because there aren't any living beings to begin with. So I haven't really killed anything." Or they hit someone for no reason at all, and when asked why they did it, they say. "There aren't any living beings, and you belong in that category, so I haven't really hit anything at all'" That's deviant knowledge and deviant views for you. When they eat meat they say, "It doesn't matter, living beings aren't supposed to have the characteristic of a lifespan anyway. Since you don't have the characteristic of a lifespan, you can die at any time, so I can go ahead and eat you. Besides, once you're dead, your flesh will just get rancid if I don't eat it." That's what adherents of externalist religions say. They say that domestic animals are put here just for human beings to eat, and if they aren't eaten, they will overpopulate the world. "If people didn't eat cows, sheep, and pigs, they would multiply until they filled up the world." But think about it; people don't eat cats, but the world has yet to be overridden with cats. In fact, when people don't eat animals, not so much killing-karma is created, and the animals don't multiply so quickly. So some people misinterpret the principles, such as the principle of patience, and say that other people should be patient with them, but that they themselves don't have to be patient with others.

Virya is Sanskrit for "vigor." There is physical vigor and mental vigor. When your mind is vigorous, you are seeking Buddhadharma at all times. When your body is vigorous, you practice the Buddhadharma at all times.

Dhyana is also a Sanskrit word; it means "quiet consideration." There are many kinds of dhyana; but now the Buddha says that there isn't any dhyana, either.

Prajna, another Sanskrit word, means "wisdom." There are three kinds of prajna: literary prajna, contemplative prajna, and actual-appearance prajna. Thus, the Six Perfections, or Paramitas, are all empty.

Paramita, also Sanskrit, means to reach the other shore. It refers to the successful completion of anything. We cultivate and become Buddhas; having progressed from the state of an ordinary beings to the state of Buddha is a case of paramita. For an ordinary person to become a Bodhisattva is another kind of paramita. Going from San Francisco to Oak land is also a kind of paramita. Now all these dharmas in the Treasury of the Thus Come One are said to not exist. They are all emptied. Previously, when we said that empty space does not exclude any appearances, we were talking about the Treasury of the Thus Come One which is not empty. Here we are discussing the empty Treasury of the Thus Come One. In describing the empty Treasury of the Thus Come One, the word "not" is used, but it does not signify total negation. What still exists is the basically wonderful, perfect mind. But that mind is not called by these names, so here the empty Treasury of the Thus Come One is being described.

Sutra:

"Nor any other: it is not the Tathagata, nor the Arhats, nor Samyaksambodhi, nor Parinirvana, nor Permanence, nor Bliss, nor True Self, nor Purity.

Commentary:

"Nor any other" means that all the levels of enlightenment, from the Six Paramitas through the ten dwellings, the ten faiths, the ten practices, the ten transferences, and the ten grounds, up to and including the fruition of Buddhahood, are included in the emptying. Progressing from the of Bodhisattvahood to the fruition of Buddhahood takes a long time, and there are many dharmas along the way, but none of them exists; they are all empty, and the fruition of Buddhahood is also empty. **"It is not the Tathagata"** which is Sanskrit for the Thus Come One. Even the title of Thus Come One

is empty. **"Nor the Arhats,"** those worthy of the offerings of people and gods. **"Nor Samyaksambodhi."** The title "One of Proper and Universal Knowledge" is also empty. "Proper knowledge" is the mind being the myriad dharmas. "Universal knowledge" is the myriad dharmas being the mind. One of Proper and Universal knowledge realizes that,

The mind is the myriad dharmas;
The myriad dharmas are the mind.

"Nor is it **Parinirvana."** The Sanskrit word "Nirvana" is interpreted as meaning "not produced and not extinguished. Even the concept of non-production and non-extinction is non existent.

"Nor is it **Permanence, nor Bliss, nor True Self, nor Purity."** "Permanence" means unmoving. "Bliss" means being filled with the joy of Dharma. "True self" is the comfort of having attained the genuine self. "Purity" is what is obtained from the dharma of Nirvana. These names are also non-existent. They are also empty.

You may ask, then, what there is in the Treasury of the Thus Come One. I've told you before that everything is there. You ask what is not there; there isn't anything there at all. Everything is made from the mind alone. The Treasury of the Thus Come One is empty, is not empty, and is both empty and not empty, and so the mystery in it is endless. You can say that things exist, you can say that they are empty, and you can say that they do not exist and are not empty. After you have studied the Buddhadharma for a long time, you will understand this.

P2 In the non-empty treasury everything exists.

Sutra:

"Therefore, it is neither mundane nor transcendental, since the Treasury of the Thus Come One is the fundamental brightness of the wonderful mind.

Commentary:

What has been discussed above is the empty Treasury of the Thus Come One. **"Therefore**, it follows from these principles that **it is neither mundane nor transcendental."** The Treasury of the Thus Come One is empty. There aren't any dharmas. This is called,

> *Sweep away all dharmas,*
> *And separate from all appearances.*

The total absence of any dharmas is True Emptiness. True Emptiness can bring about Wonderful Existence.

"Mundane" refers to the six ordinary Dharma Realms. "Transcendental" refers to the four holy Dharma Realms. **"The Treasury of the Thus Come One is the fundamental brightness of the wonderful mind."** On the other hand, the mundane and transcendental dharmas are just the Treasury of the Thus Come One – fundamentally bright and illumining. They are the wonderful mind which is still and constantly illumining, illumining and constantly still. The text here says the Treasury of the Thus Come One "is not," and the text that follows says that absolutely everything "is" the Treasury of the Thus Come One, the fundamental brightness of the wonderful mind.

Sutra:

"It is the mind, it is emptiness, it is earth, it is water, it is wind, it is fire, it is the eyes, it is the ears, the nose, the tongue, the body, and the mind. It is form, it is sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas. It is the realm of eye-consciousness, and so forth up to and including the realm of mind-consciousness.

Commentary:

"It is the mind, the discriminating, conscious mind, **it is emptiness, it is earth, it is water, it is wind, it is fire, it is the eyes, it is the ears, the nose, the tongue, the body, and the mind. It is form, it is sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas.**

It is the realm of eye-consciousness, and so forth up to and including the realm of mind-consciousness. So, the empty Treasury of the Thus Come One is also the existent Treasury of the Thus Come One, the Treasury of the Thus Come One which is not empty. Thus, in the Treasury of the Thus Come One, which is empty and yet not empty, there is the fundamental brightness of the Wonderful Mind. It is the five skandhas, the six en trances, the twelve places, and the eighteen realms.

Sutra:

"It is understanding and ignorance and the ending of understanding and ignorance, and so forth up to and including old age and death and the ending of old age and death. It is suffering, it is accumulation, it is extinction, and it is the way. It is knowing and attaining. It is Dana, it is Shila, it is Virya, it is Kshanti, it is Dhyana, it is Prajna, and it is Paramita, and so forth, up to and including the Tathagata, the Arhats, Samyaksambodhi, Parinirvana, Permanence, Bliss, True Self, and Purity.

Commentary:

This section of text describes the Treasury of the Thus Come One which is not empty – Previously, the empty Treasury of the Thus Come One was described. Now it is said to be not empty. If it's empty, why is it now said not to be empty? After it's empty. it can be not empty. If it were empty and if that's all there were to it, it wouldn't be wonderful. It's because True Emptiness is what gives rise to Wonderful Existence. And Wonderful Existence produces True Emptiness. So now the Treasury of the Thus Come One which is not empty is giving rise to Wonderful Existence. Therefore, the five skandhas, the six entrances, the twelve places, the eighteen realms, the four truths, and the twelve causal conditions, and so forth – none of them is empty. They can be empty or not empty because there are no fixed dharmas. That's why the *Vajra Sutra* says,

Even dharmas should be relinquished,
Not to speak of no dharmas.

You should not be attached to the existence of dharmas. be cause if you are, you have an attachment to dharmas. If you have an attachment to dharmas, it is the same as if you had not understood the Dharma. Originally you have an attachment to self, but then when you encounter the Dharma you give rise to attachment to dharmas. In Buddhism, then, you can t have any attachments. If there are no attachments, existence is just non-existence. If you have attachments, then non-existence exists.

P3 In the empty-not-empty treasury is perfect fusion.

Sutra:

"It is both mundane and transcendental, since the Treasury of the Thus Come One is the wonderful brightness of the fundamental mind.

Commentary:

In the previous passage, it is said that it is the five skandhas, the six entrances, the twelve places, the eighteen realms, the four truths, the twelve causal conditions, the six paramitas, and so forth, including the titles of the Thus Come One. It is all these things. Further, **"It is both mundane and transcendental, since the Treasury of the Thus Come One is the wonderful brightness of the fundamental mind,"** the basic mind that is still and always illumining.

Sutra:

"It is apart from 'is' and 'is not.' It is identical with 'is' and 'is not.'

Commentary:

"**It is apart from 'is,'** from existence, and **'is not,'** non-existence." It's not that is does exist, and it is not that it doesn't exist. That's True Emptiness and Wonderful Existence. So, the principle of the Treasury of the Thus Come One which is empty and

yet not empty is that it is apart from emptiness and existence and yet not apart from emptiness and existence. And, in light of this principle, the Buddha spoke what follows.

N2 He upbraids them for conceptualizing and verbalizing.

Sutra:

"How can living beings in the three realms of existence on the level of worldliness and the Sound-Hearers and Those Enlightened to Conditions on the level of transcendence make suppositions about the supreme Bodhi of the Thus Come One with the minds that they know of, or enter the knowledge and vision of the Buddha through the medium of worldly language and expressions?

Commentary:

"How can living beings in the three realms of existence on the level of worldliness – how can worldly living beings in the desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm, in the six common Dharma-realms – **the Sound-Hearers and Those Enlightened to Conditions on the level of transcendence –** the Arhats of the Two Vehicles – how can they **make suppositions about the supreme Bodhi of the Thus Come One with the minds that they know of?"** At that time, Purna had already been certified as having attained the Fourth Fruition of Arhatship, so the Buddha says, "the minds you know of" – the mind of an ordinary person and the mind of an Arhat. "How can you investigate the Buddha's enlightenment which no one surpasses? **Or enter the knowledge and vision of the Buddha through the medium of worldly language and expressions?** You want to know the Buddha's knowledge and vision – you want to get into the same state as the Buddha; but how can that be?" "Worldly language" is the knowledge and vision of ordinary people. "And even you who have transcended the mundane and are at the fourth stage of Arhatship still cannot imagine the state of the Buddha. You can't use language and consideration to make suppositions about it, to guess at it." "Make suppositions" means you don't really know, but you assume

something about it. For example, a child likes to eat candy, so it supposes that everyone likes to eat candy. It doesn't know that some grown-ups don't like candy.

By the same token, ordinary people, and even Arhats who are still in the state of the small vehicle, don't have total comprehension, and so they don't know the state of the Buddha.

N3 Conclusion: an analogy for the seeming loss.

Sutra:

"For example, lutes, flutes, and guitars can make wonderful sounds, but if there are no skilled fingers to play them, their music will never come forth.

Commentary:

Although the Treasury of the Thus Come One is empty, it is nonetheless replete with all dharmas. **"For example, lutes, flutes, and guitars can make wonderful sounds."** Various instruments can make subtle, wonderful sounds. **But if there are no skilled fingers to play them, their music will never come forth."** No matter how fine the instrument is, there is no way it can play itself. There must be clever fingers to play it. Although the text speaks of "skilled fingers," there must also be a skilled mind. The mind cannot control the fingers if it is not skilled. The skill in the fingers comes from a skilled mind, which is what brings forth the exquisite sounds.

Sutra:

"You and all living beings are the same way. The precious, enlightened mind is perfect in everyone. Thus, I press my finger upon it and the ocean-impression emits light; you move your mind, and the wearisome defilements spring up.

Commentary:

The musical instrument that needs a musician before it f can make music – the instrument may be fine, but what comes out may not sound so good if one is not a musician – is an analogy for the

Treasury of the Thus Come One. The Buddha tells Purna, **"You and all living beings are the same way.** With your ordinary thought you try to make suppositions about the state of the Thus Come One, and so you fit the analogy. **The precious, enlightened mind is perfect in everyone.** Every person is complete with it. **Thus, I press my finger upon it and the ocean-impression emits light."** Here the Thus Come One refers to himself. "All I need do is press my finger and the ocean-impression emits light. What is the 'ocean-impression'? It is a kind of samadhi which the Buddha has where the myriad things are all known to the mind as if they had been imprinted on it like a seal. When the ocean is completely smooth, it can reflect the myriad things; it is what is meant by the 'ocean-impression emits light.'

You move your mind, and the wearisome defilements spring up. As soon as a thought comes to your mind, the tiresome dust arises. The false-thinking mind manifests itself." The Buddha presses his finger and the ocean-impression emits light, which shows how subtle and miraculous the state Of the Buddha is. Purna and other living beings don't have such a subtle state. They exist in a state of wearisome defilements.

L2 Again the explanation brings up a question.
M1 Purna asks about the cause for falseness and decides to vigorously cultivate.

Sutra:

"It is all because you do not diligently seek the unsurpassed enlightened Way, but are fond of the lesser vehicle and are satisfied with little attainment."

Commentary:

Here the Buddha scolds Purna even more severely. "Why haven't you cut off your wearisome defilements? Why do you move your mind and let the tiresome dust spring up? **"It is all because you do not diligently seek the unsurpassed enlightened Way.** You aren't attentive at all times to the unsurpassed path to enlightenment, **but are fond of the lesser vehicle and are satisfied**

with little attainment. You are greedy for the dharmas of the small vehicle and are content with having attained a slight state."

This section of text is very important. Everyone should take a look at himself. Ask yourself whether you are actually diligently seeking unsurpassed Bodhi. Are you genuinely seeking the Buddhadharma? If you really want to understand the Buddhadharma, you should diligently seek unsurpassed Bodhi. Ask yourself what you are doing here every day. "Is it the case that I just follow the crowd? If people laugh, do I laugh? If people talk, do I talk?" If you just follow the crowd, you are not really developing your own skill. If you are really working on yourself, then you aren't even aware of it when someone beside you speaks. You don't even hear them. If someone walks past you, you don't even see them.

"I'm not deaf, I'm not blind," you say. "Why wouldn't I see them? Why wouldn't I hear someone speak?"

If you are able not to see and not to hear, even though you are not blind or deaf: that is the wonderful. Then you've really got something. You are not blind or deaf, but

Your eyes see forms,
but inside there is nothing.
Your ears hear mundane sounds,
but the mind does not know.

If you can be like that, then I know that you are diligently seeking unsurpassed Bodhi. If you are not like that, you should be courageous, truly set your mind on the Way, and seek the unsurpassed Path.

One day someone said to me, "There's not a single place here that's quiet." If you yourself are quiet, then every place is quiet. If you yourself are not quiet, then no place will be quiet. If you are not quiet within and are turned around by external states, there will be external states wherever you go. No matter where you go to the mountains, to the rivers, on the great earth, in the houses and cottages, on the porches and verandas – no matter where you go it

will not be quiet. It is because you can't even get along with yourself. You get angry with yourself. And why is that? Because you can't control your environment. You are influenced by it.

When someone passes by a person who diligently seeks for Bodhi, he doesn't notice the person passing; if someone says something nearby him, he doesn't even hear it.

"You are always urging the impossible," you protest. "It can't be done."

If you can find a way to do the impossible, then it counts. All of these things are insignificant states if you have the Way. If you can turn the noisy city into a mountain grove, you've got some skill.

So, ask yourself whether you are diligently seeking the unsurpassed Bodhi. Or have you come here just to find fault with people instead? "So-and-so is all right, but so-and-so is always wrong." Do you just keep pointing the camera outward to take pictures of others and never of your self? You should return the light and look within. Have you really been studying during the time you have been studying the Buddhadharma? If not, then you've wasted your time. If you have been seriously studying, ask yourself what ad vantages you have gained. If you haven't gained any, you should work even harder. Take for example your ability to recite the Shurangama Mantra. How are you doing? Can you recite it from memory? After all, the *Shurangama Sutra* was spoken on behalf of the Shurangama Mantra. Without the Shurangama Mantra, there wouldn't even be a *Shurangama Sutra*. So, even if you don't understand the text of the *Shurangama Sutra*, you pass if you can recite the Shurangama Mantra from memory. But don't worry about it too much. You should still eat when it's time to eat and sleep when it's time to sleep. Don't get so concerned about not being able to recite the Shurangama Mantra from memory that when it's time to eat you can't get the food down, and when it's time to sleep you have insomnia. If you get all bothered about it, you'll be even less able to learn the Mantra.

I said you should look and yet not see, listen and yet not hear. But people are turned around by situations and cannot control them. You pay a lot of attention to something when you first see it. But after a while you forget about it, and it ceases to exist for you. Take a clock as an example. The old ones used to go "tick, tock'" and then chime. If you had such a clock, you might notice its ticking at first, but after you got used to it, you wouldn't even hear it anymore. If you listen for it, it's still ticking, but if you pay it no mind, it's as if it isn't there at all. This proves that if your mind is not attached to something, it doesn't exist. And that's what's meant by

The eyes see forms,
but inside there is nothing.
The ears hear sounds,
but the mind does not know.

So you join everyone here in meditation, but then complain that a certain person wiggles. The person beside you keeps moving; but don't put the blame on him. It's just that you don't have enough samadhi-power. If you did, then no matter how much the person next to you moved, you wouldn't even know it. How do you know that person is moving? Because you are moving. Your mind is moving.

That's a state. There are little states and big states, good states and bad states. All you have to do is know how to use the Buddhadharma and none of them is any problem.

"But I can't use it now," you protest. If you can't use it, you have to think of a way to do so. You have to keep heading in that direction. As your skill deepens, you will quite naturally not be moved by states. Once you have enough samadhi, no state will move your mind. In China there's a saying:

When you have studied in depth,
You won't have a temper.

People fly off the handle when they lack sufficient education. If your samadhi is sufficient, then even if something is really bad, you can influence it for the better. For example, I've said that as long as I am in San Francisco the earth will not quake. People who don't understand the Buddhadharma think that this is impossible. But if you understand the Buddhadharma and you practice until you have some samadhi, then wherever you are, the earth stays put. It's absolutely certain that there won't be a problem. So now we are all studying samadhi-power, and when you really have samadhi-power, it will be peaceful wherever you go. If you don't have any samadhi, then even peaceful places won't be peaceful, because your mind is moving. With samadhi-power you can transform your environment. This is most important.

Therefore, you must first study the Shurangama Mantra, and then you must study the Shurangama Samadhi. With the Shurangama Samadhi, you are not afraid of anything; you are really solid. So now I am telling the earth here in San Francisco to remain solid, and even if an atom bomb fell, it wouldn't matter, it wouldn't go off. You should all have faith and not be afraid. With the Shurangama Mantra, and with the fact that we are explaining the *Shurangama Sutra*, there is nothing to be afraid of. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are certainly protecting us as we study the Buddhadharma here, so none of you should worry.

Sutra:

Purna said, "I am non-dual and complete with the Thus Come One's perfect brightness of the precious enlightenment, the true wonder of the pure mind. But long ago I was victimized by false thoughts that have no beginning and I have long endured the turning wheel of rebirth. Now I have attained the sagely vehicle, but it is not yet ultimate. The World Honored One has completely extinguished all falseness and obtained wonderful true permanence.

Commentary:

Having heard the Buddha say that Purna did not diligently seek unsurpassed Bodhi, was greedy for the dharmas of the lesser vehicle, and was satisfied with a little, Purna responded, **"I am non-dual and complete with the Thus Come One's perfect brightness of the precious enlightenment."** He said that he and the Buddha were both replete with the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, **the true wonder of the pure mind.** There is no division into two, and it is not that there is more or less of anything. But, although the Buddha's true, wonderful, pure mind and mine each has the precious enlightenment and is perfectly bright, **long ago I was victimized by false thoughts that have no beginning and I have long endured the turning wheel of rebirth.** In the past I got caught up in beginningless false thoughts, and for ever so long I have been turning over and over again in the six paths of rebirth. **Now I have attained the sagely vehicle.** Now I have been certified as having attained the fourth fruition of Arhatship. **But it is not yet ultimate.** But I haven't yet gotten completely rid of my left-over habits of false thinking. My true mind has not yet revealed itself. **The World Honored One has completely extinguished all falseness and obtained wonderful true permanence.** For the World Honored One, the false is gone and only the true remains. His state is particularly subtle, wonderful, and truly permanent. It will never change."

Sutra:

"I venture to ask the Thus Come One why all living beings exist in falseness and conceal their own wonderful brightness, so that they keep drowning in this deluge?"

Commentary:

"I venture to ask the Thus Come One, I dare to question the Buddha, **why all living beings exist in falseness.** Why do they suddenly give rise to falseness?" This is like Purna's earlier question: "If the fundamental purity pervades the Dharma Realm, why do there suddenly arise the mountains, the rivers, and the great

earth?" Living beings' self-nature is basically pure and devoid of falseness. Why then does the falseness arise?

"And why do they **conceal their own wonderful brightness, so that they keep drowning in this deluge?"** They cover over their wonderfully bright true mind, and they go on in this world, turning through the paths of rebirth, until they are submerged in this world, just like being drowned. They keep sinking into the mire of the wheel of birth and death.

M2 The Thus Come One uses an analogy to show there is no cause and instructs him to immediately stop.
N1 The analogy to explain that there is no cause.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Purna, "Although you have cast off doubts, you still have not ended residual delusions. I will now employ a worldly event in questioning you.

Commentary:

Purna wanted to know why false thinking should arise in the fundamental purity which pervades the Dharma Realm, false thinking which covers over the wonderful bright mind of everyone. In reply, **The Buddha said to Purna, "Although you have cast off doubts, you still have not ended residual delusions."** When I explained the continuity of the world, the continuity of living beings, and the continuity of karmic retribution to you, you got rid of your doubts, but you still haven't completely realized the principle and are not yet totally clear – You still have a few questions. **I will now employ a worldly event in questioning you.** It will be easy for you to understand an ordinary event, a worldly phenomenon, so I will employ one in asking you some questions."

N2 He correlates the dharma and the analogy.

Sutra:

"Have you not heard of Yajnadatta in Shravasti who on impulse one morning held a mirror to his face and fell in love with the head in the mirror? He gazed at the eyes and eyebrows

but got angry because he could not see his own face. He decided he must be a li mei ghost. Having lost all his bearings, he ran madly out. What do you think? Why did this person set out on a mad chase for no reason?"

Purna said, "That person was insane. There's no other reason."

Commentary:

"Purna, haven't you heard this story? **Have you not heard of Yajnadatta in Shravasti who on impulse one morning held a mirror to his face?** Didn't you hear the news about Yajnadatta in the city of Flourishing Virtue?" At that time there were no newspapers; word just got around. Yajnadatta's name means "Arrived in a Temple," (祠接) because once his mother went to a god's temple to pray and gave birth to her son while she was there.

One morning Yajnadatta got up and impulsively, with out any forethought, picked up a mirror and held it to his face. His own face was reflected in the mirror, and he loved what he saw. He was delighted with how handsome the head in the mirror was.

"He **fell in love with the head in the mirror**. **He gazed at the eyes and eyebrows**: He scrutinized the features and decided the head was superb, **but got angry because he could not see his own face.**" Then, suddenly he flew into a rage. "Why don't I have a head?" he demanded. "Imagine how fine it would be if I had a head like that'" He got exasperated because he couldn't see his own face and thought he didn't have a head. "I can see the head in the mirror perfectly well. Why can't I see my own face and eyes?" **He decided he must be a li mei ghost.** At this point he made a mistake. He thought he was a ghost or a weird creature of some kind. *Li mei* ghosts dwell in the mountains, and they have a kind of bewitching

power. *Li mei* and *wang liang* are two kind of ghosts. There's a verse in Chinese about them:

琴瑟琵琶
八大王，
王王在上
四小鬼，
鬼鬼居傍
魑魅魍魎

Lutes, flutes, ballon guitars:
Eight great kings, every king on top.
Li mei, wang liang:
Four small ghosts, each ghost to the side.

Once he had decided he was a ghost, he **"lost all his bearings, he ran madly out."** He was trying to shake the ghost. He ran up and down the streets of the city. There wasn't any other reason for his behavior except that he had become possessed with the idea that he was a ghost.

"What do you think? Purna, what's your idea about this? **Why did this person set out on a mad chase for no reason?"** What was actually behind the unreasonable behavior that led him to run madly about?"

Purna said, "That person was insane. There's no other reason." Yajnadatta went crazy; he had no sane motive. He didn't understand, and therefore, he said he must be a weird creature, because he couldn't see his own head. Now, is it true that he didn't have a head? I believe that all of you are more intelligent than Yajnadatta, and that none of you would conclude that you didn't have a head just because you saw a head in a mirror. Basically, he hadn't lost his head, but he thought he had.

Purna had asked Shakyamuni Buddha why living beings give rise to falseness for no reason. Shakyamuni Buddha then brought up Yajnadatta and asked why he had decided on impulse that he didn't have a head. Purna replied that Yajnadatta's mind had gone mad. Why do living beings give rise to falseness? It's just because they give rise to falseness in the true mind. It's certainly not that fundamentally there is a root of falseness there which can produce the falseness. The principle is the same as with the case of Yajnadatta.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "What reason can you give for calling false the wonderful enlightened bright perfection, the fundamentally perfect bright wonder? If there is a reason, then how can you say it is false?

Commentary:

The Buddha said to Purna, **"What reason can you give for calling false the wonderful enlightened bright perfection, the fundamentally perfect bright wonder?"** The Buddha is referring to the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, which is still and yet constantly illumining, illumining and yet constantly still. It is subtle, wonderful, and inconceivable. "What reason," the Buddha asks Purna, "can you have for saying that the nature of the Treasury of The Thus Come One is empty and false? **If there is a reason,** there's some basis for it, if it is a critical judgement, if there's some good reason behind your doing so, **how can you say it is false?** If you can pass a critical judgment about something, it must exist. It would be true, not false, and you wouldn't be able to say it was empty and false."

Sutra:

"All your own false thinking becomes in turn the cause for more. From confusion you accumulate confusion through kalpa after kalpa; although the Buddha is aware of it, he cannot counteract it.

Commentary:

"**All your own false thinking,** although it is false, gives rise to a lot more falseness." False thoughts are like ants – in a short amount of time a few can produce many. Or like bacteria. How does this happen? It's as I've said before:

The good get together,
The bad gang up:
People find their own kind.

In the same way, false thoughts arise, accumulate, and **"becomes in turn the cause for more."** Suddenly there's a lot of false thinking. In fact, that is what keeps people from be coming enlightened. If it isn't one false thought coming in, it's another one arriving, they flock in and out like guests at an open house. I asked one of you what you thought about in meditation, and the answer was, "Sometimes I think about good things to eat, sometimes about wearing nice clothes, or about living in a fine house, or buying a new car. Sometimes I even plan how I'm going to buy a helicopter when I get the money." When you sit in meditation, all these thoughts arise. One goes by and the next one arrives, coming and going – "all your own false thinking."

"From confusion you accumulate confusion. One in stance of confusion breeds a lot more, **through kalpa after kalpa"**: Because your false thinking is so great, you can't put a stop to it, and so you keep your self-nature busy from morning to night. Basically, the self-nature is fundamentally pure and pervades the Dharmarealm, but when it entertains too much false thinking, it can't rest. It entertains false thinking for kalpa after kalpa and is never finished. "Today this false thought invited me over, and tomorrow I've been asked by that false thought to go to a play. The day after tomorrow I've got a date with another false thought to go dancing, and then there are meetings and social gatherings. In general, there are a lot of things happening." And so for kalpa after kalpa, from time

without beginning until today, you still haven't finished having meetings.

"Although the Buddha is aware of it, he cannot counteract it." The Buddha sees all this going on, but he can't counteract it. He can't get you to turn around and face the other way. You are still friends with the false thoughts and can't renounce them.

If you can't renounce death,
you can't change life.
If you can't reject the false,
you won't succeed with the true.

"Does 'renouncing death' mean that I die now, and does 'changing life' mean I go off to a new rebirth?" you ask. No. It means that while you are still alive, you look upon yourself as a living dead person. If you do that, then you won't flare up if someone criticizes you or gloat if someone compliments you. Just pretend you are dead. Don't be so worried about your reputation, and don't put a lot of energy into this thin shell of physical existence. "Renounce death", that way, and then after such a "big death" you can have a "big life."

If you can't reject the false,
you won't succeed with the true.

Why haven't you attained to your precious, perfectly enlightened nature? It's because you have too much false thinking add can't renounce it. And every day your mind that seeks advantage from situations grows. Once you start seeking advantage from situations, there's no point in hoping to accomplish the Way.

Most people put their energy into lifeless things. People who cultivate the Way should apply their skill to living things. "Lifeless things" means your physical body, which keeps you hopping on its behalf. In the future, your body will certainly die. The "living thing" is our self-nature which never dies. When your physical

body dies, your self-nature does not die. It just moves to a new house.

Sutra:

"From such confused causes, the cause of confusion perpetuates itself. When one realizes that confusion has no cause, the falseness becomes baseless. Since it never arose, why would you hope for its extinction? One who obtains Bodhi is like a person who awakens to realize the events of a dream; even though his mind is awake and clear, he cannot get hold of the things in the dream and physically display them.

Commentary:

"From such confused causes, the cause of confusion perpetuates itself. You encounter confusion and it seems to really exist. The false thinking appears to be real enough, but actually it is phony. You seem to have false thinking, but actually the confusion doesn't have a substantial nature. Thus, you can't say that confusion gives rise to confusion, because confusion doesn't have any substance of its own. **When one realizes that confusion has no cause –** that there is nothing for confusion to rely on; that it has no seed, no root – **the falseness becomes baseless.** Once you realize that confusion hasn't any substance, how can the false remain? **Since it never arose**: It has no way to come into being. The person who said he didn't have a head thought he didn't have one, but it was really growing right there on his shoulders. Confusion is a temporary lack of clarity. It's not that your confusion completely obliterates your enlightened nature. **Why would you hope for its extinction?** If it doesn't arise, how can you say it is destroyed?

"One who obtains Bodhi is like a person who awakens to realize the events of a dream. When he was asleep he was the Emperor, had a whole passel of advisors, ate fine foods, and was richly dressed, and everything he did reaped immeasurable blessings. **Even though his mind is awake and clear, he cannot get hold of the things in the dream and physically display**

them." Could he bring out the events in the dream and show them to people? No. Who is the person whose mind is "awake and clear?" It's the Buddha. The Buddha can speak Dharma to point out that you experience all kinds of states in a dream, but he can't take the states from the dream and display them for you in actuality. Although the Buddha speaks Dharma to destroy confusion and falseness, nevertheless he can't physically get hold of false thoughts and confusion and show them to you. All he can do is use analogies to instruct you. Don't expect him to pull out the actual things as proof. So, he's like the person who awakens from a dream and can talk about all the things that happened, but he can't pull out the actual things of the dream and show them to you.

Sutra:

"How much the more is that the case with some thing which is without a cause and basically non-existent, such as Yajnadatta's situation that day in the city? Was there any reason why he became fearful for his head and went running about? If his madness were suddenly to cease, it would not be that he had obtained his head from someplace outside; and so before his madness ceases, how can his head have been lost?

Commentary:

"How much the more is that the case with some thing which is without a cause? Since you can't display the things you saw in a dream to prove to others that you saw them, how much the more impossible would it be to prove the existence of something that has no source, no root, and no cause, and that is **basically non-existent**? Confusion certainly has no substance or appearance. There isn't any "thing" there at all. It is like **Yajnadatta's situation that day in the city**. **Was there any reason why he became fearful for his head and went running about?"** Was there really any reason why he got frightened and began to question the existence of his own head? His doubt was this: He said he couldn't see his own head and concluded that he didn't have a head. He saw a head in the mirror but didn't realize that it was his own. He

thought it existed independent of him there in the mirror. So, he scolded himself for not having a head and called him self a headless freak. And that's why he began running around. **"If his madness were suddenly to cease, it would not be that he had obtained his head from someplace outside."** His craziness might stop, but it; isn't that his head has returned from somewhere else. This represents the fact that although we have given rise to confusion, confusion has no nature of its own; it has no substance or appearance. Although the True Suchness of the self-nature may become confused, it is never lost. And, when there is no confusion, it isn't the case that one has obtained the True Suchness of the self-nature. In the same way, one's head is one's own all along. It's not the case that one can obtain a head or lose a head.

"And so before his madness ceases, how can his head have been lost?" When Yajnadatta lost his head, where did it go? That's the topic for today. If you know where it went, then you understand a certain amount of this Sutra. If you don't know where it went, you should listen attentively to the Sutra right now, and you will understand. Even before his madness ceases, then, has he in fact lost his head, or hasn't he? Is it really gone?

Sutra:

"Purna, falseness is the same way. How can it exist?

Commentary:

The head didn't actually go anywhere. It wasn't lost. The only reason he thought he didn't have a head is that he got confused. **"Purna, falseness is the same way. How can it exist?"** Where is the root of falseness? It doesn't have any support or any foundation. Without a root, then, where do you suppose confusion and falseness really are? You can't find them.

N3 He explains that he should immediately stop.

Sutra:

"All you need do is not follow discriminations, because none of the three causes arises when the three conditions of the three

continuities of the world, living beings, and karmic retribution are cut off.

Commentary:

"All you need do – you don't have to use any other method **– is not follow** the **discriminations –** of your false thinking, **because none of the three causes arises when the three conditions of the three continuities of the world, living beings, and karmic retribution are cut off."** If you don't give rise to discriminations, then there is no world, there are no living beings, and there is no karmic retribution; the three conditions are cut off. These three continuities existed in the first place because of your false consciousness and discriminating mind. When the conditions are cut off, the causes do not arise.

Sutra:

"Then the madness of the Yajnadatta in your mind will cease of itself, and just that ceasing is Bodhi. The supreme, pure, bright mind originally pervades the Dharma Realm. It is not something obtained from anyone else. Why, then, labor and toil with marrow and joint to cultivate and be certified?

Commentary:

"Then the madness of the Yajnadatta in your mind, your mad mind, **will cease of itself.** Your confusion will quiet itself, **and just that ceasing is Bodhi."** It's not the case that once it ceases it can start up again. The ceasing it self is Bodhi. Simply getting rid of the confusion is the true. It's not that after the confusion is gone, there is the true. Rather, once you understand in the midst of your confusion, the truth reveals itself. They are not two things. Your understanding is true, and your lack of under standing is confusion. The confusion basically has no foundation, and if you can stop it, that ceasing is itself Bodhi, the enlightened nature.

"The supreme, pure, bright mind, which is incomparable and undefiled, with a light that shines everywhere, **originally pervades the Dharma Realm. It is not something obtained from anyone**

else; that is, it doesn't come from someplace external. It is something inherent in every person. The true mind – the supreme, pure, bright mind – is not greater in the Buddha's case, even by a little bit, nor is it even a little bit smaller in the case of living beings, although it is in the midst of confusion. The supreme, pure, bright mind is innate in everyone; no one lacks it. It is not something borrowed from someone else or obtained from some external place.

"Why, then, labor and toil with marrow and joint to cultivate and be certified?" An example of labor and toil is that of parents for their children. They nourish the baby, change its diapers, and do everything in their power to display their kindness and concern for it. By the same token, you don't need to treat your self-nature like a baby and labor and toil on its behalf because the self-nature is inherent in you. You don't have to care for it with the toil "of marrow and joint."

The butcher, P'an Ting, in Chuang Tze's *Yang Shen Chu*, was so powerful that he could decapitate a cow without exerting his "marrow and joints." He could cut through with a single swipe. The meaning of "marrow and joint" here in the text is that you don't have to calculate and formulate a plan for how you are going to cultivate and become certified. There is no cultivation of this Dharma and no certification to it. One cultivates as if not cultivating and is certified as if there is no certification. This is the effortless Way. And the fine points of it are perfectly fused and unobstructed. You don't have to cultivate and be certified. Didn't Ananda say earlier, "So that I needn't pass through countless aeons to attain the Dharma body?" He doesn't have to go through three great asamkhyeya kalpas to attain the Dharma body. The wonderful Dharma of the *Shurangama Sutra* is just in this: It is not necessary to labor and toil in marrow and joint to cultivate and be certified.

N4 He concludes with an analogy to show it is not lost.

Sutra:

"This is to be like the person who has a wish fulfilling pearl sewn in his clothing without realizing it. Thus he roams abroad

in a state of poverty, begging for food and always on the move. Although he is indeed destitute, the pearl is never lost.

Commentary:

If the Yajnadatta within you, your mad mind, ceases – if your false thinking, your perpetual state of confusion and lack of enlightenment disappears – then Bodhi appears. But, the appearance of Bodhi is not something that is obtained from outside, nor is there any need to nourish it in yourself. It is something we have all along. The Buddha now gives Purna another example, **"This is to be like the person who has a wish fulfilling pearl sewn in his clothing without realizing it."** The wish-fulfilling pearl makes whatever wish you might have come true. The first Hand and Eye in the Great Compassion Dharma is the Hand and Eye of the Wish-Fulfilling Pearl. If you want gold, you can have gold; if you want silver, you can have silver; anything at all can manifest from the wish fulfilling pearl. Someone who has a wish-fulfilling pearl is the wealthiest person on earth, because it can never be used up. You can have whatever wealth and riches come to your mind

The person in the Buddha's example has a wish-fulfilling pearl sewn in his clothing **"without realizing it."** Maybe he once knew, but with the passage of time, he has forgotten about it. He is probably a very forgetful person and doesn't even remember such an important matter as this. **"Thus he roams abroad in a state of poverty"** He is penniless: so destitute that he has hardly any clothes to wear. Perhaps he doesn't have a house and has to sleep along the road. By this I don't mean that he is like people who get together and go camping out in the open. They do that for fun. This person is so poor that he has no choice. He must "beg **for food** and he is **always on the move.** He ends up a beggar. **Although he is indeed destitute, the pearl is never lost.**" Although the fact of his poverty is very real, he has still hot lost his wish-fulfilling pearl. This shows that although we people are in a state of confusion, our self-nature is not lost.

One may be confused, lack understanding, and not study the Buddhadharma, still, the self-nature is not lost. Those greedy for worldly riches and honor, for entertainment and pleasure, don't realize that these mundane attainments are not genuine riches and honor. The poorest people are those who do not recognize genuine principle; they are those who do not understand the Buddhadharma. Since you don't under stand the Buddhadharma, you don't realize that your self nature is like the hidden wish-fulfilling pearl. But, even when you don't understand your self-nature, still the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One – the supreme, pure, bright mind – is certainly not lost. It is still inherently yours.

Those who cultivate and believe in the Buddhadharma understand that their self-nature is inherent within them, and they come to discover their innate wealth. That is genuine riches and honor.

Sutra:

"Suddenly, a wise person shows him the pearl: all his wishes are fulfilled, he obtains great wealth, and he realizes that the pearl did not come from somewhere outside."

Commentary:

"Suddenly, a wise person shows him the pearl." The wise person is analogous to the Buddha. Showing him the pearl in his clothing represents pointing out to him his inherent Buddha-nature. **"All his wishes are fulfilled,"** when he obtains the wish-fulfilling pearl. He can have whatever he wants, and **"he obtains great wealth."** He be comes an elder with great blessings. He has so much money that he can't count it all, even with the help of accountants The "great wealth" represents one's understanding of one's inherent self-nature and one's being certified as having attained the enlightened fruition of Bodhi. **"He realizes that the pearl did not come from somewhere outside."** He understands that the "spiritual pearl," the wish-fulfilling pearl, is not obtained from outside. This means that he knows that his inherent Buddha-nature is not obtained from outside himself. When you can

accomplish Buddhahood, You will know, and you'll say, "Oh, so that's what it's all about." When you become enlightened, you will know that basically you were an enlightened person all along. You'll think, "If I'd realized this earlier, I wouldn't have had put forth so much effort. I wouldn't have had to go outside begging for food. I wouldn't have had to endure such poverty." But you haven't had a wise person to instruct you, and you yourself have already forgotten. So, as we listen to instruction on the *Shurangama Sutra*, each of us should discover the wish-fulfilling pearl in his or her clothing. If you uncover your wish-fulfilling pearl, you will become the most wealthy person in the world. Another definition of genuine wealth is this:

The mind's stopping and thoughts' ceasing:
That is true wealth and honor.
Selfish desires cut off completely:
That is the true field of blessings.

If your false-thinking mind stops, if your crazy thoughts disappear, then you have attained genuine wealth and honor. So, when you obtain the wish-fulfilling pearl, you won't have any more greed, because you will already have everything. Everything will be yours, and if you have no selfishness, no thoughts of desire, then you are a person who is a genuine field of blessings.

CHAPTER 3

Ananda Attaches to Causes and Conditions

J2 He also instructs Ananda.
K1 Ananda traces the Buddha's words and attaches to causes a conditions.

Sutra:

Ananda then bowed at the Buddha's feet, arose in the Great Assembly, and said to the Buddha, "The World Honored One now explains that when the three conditions of the karma of killing, stealing, and lust are cut off, the three causes for them do not arise. Then the madness of Yajnadatta in the mind ceases of itself, and just that ceasing is Bodhi. It is not something obtained from anyone else. These clearly are causes and conditions; why, then, does the Thus Come One abruptly reject causes and conditions?

Commentary:

Ananda then bowed at the Buddha's feet, he prostrated himself and grasped the Buddha's feet, then **arose in the Great Assembly, and said to the Buddha, "The World Honored One now explains that when the three conditions of the karma of killing, stealing, and lust are cut off" –** the Buddha has discussed how the greed of killing, the greed of stealing, and the greed of lust,

these three kinds of karma, bring about the continuity of the world, the continuity of living beings. and the continuity of karmic retribution. When these three conditions are cut off, **"The three causes for them do not arise. Then the madness of Yajnadatta in the mind**, that confusion in the mind, **ceases of itself, and just that ceasing is Bodhi. It is not something obtained from anyone else.** It does not come from somewhere outside. That's what the Buddha said. **These clearly are causes and conditions.** This principle is quite obviously the dharma of causes and conditions. **Why, then, does the Thus Come One abruptly reject causes and conditions?** Why does the World Honored One reject causes and conditions, spontaneity, and mixing and uniting? What you are talking about right now is the dharma of causes and conditions."

Sutra:

"It was through causes and conditions that my mind became enlightened, World Honored One, and that is not only true of us who are young in years, of us Sound-Hearers who still have to study. Mahamaudgalyayana, Shariputra, and Subhuti, who are now in this assembly and who followed the elder Brahmans, became enlightened and obtained the state of no outflows upon hearing the Buddha expound upon causes and conditions.

Commentary:

Ananda said, **"It was through** the principle of **causes and conditions that my mind became enlightened, World Honored One, and that is not only true of us who are young in years,** of us Bhikshus, **of us Sound-Hearers who still have to study."** The level of fourth-stage Arhatship is called the position of "having nothing left to study." Those at the level of the first, second, and third fruition still have to study. "Sound-Hearers" are the Arhats who awakened to the Way upon hearing the Buddha speak Dharma. **"Mahamaudgalyayana,** of the 'Big Bean Clan,' **Shariputra,** 'Son of the Egret,' **Subhuti,** 'Born into Emptiness,' **who are now in this assembly and who followed the elder Brahmans –** the Brahmans who expounded the theory of spontaneity – **became enlightened**

and obtained the state of no outflows upon hearing the Buddha expound upon causes and conditions.” They heard the doctrine of the Twelve Conditioned Causes as expressed by the Buddha and became enlightened. They became Arhats with no outflows. They had no more ignorance, and so

All their outflows were ended;
They had done what had to be done,
And would undergo no further becoming.

When all their outflows were ended, they became fourth-stage Arhats – they obtained the penetration of the extinction of outflows. They had done what had to be done and would not have to undergo further rebirth.

Sutra:

“Now you say that Bodhi does not come from causes and conditions. So the spontaneity that Maskari Goshaliputra and others advocated in Rajagriha then becomes the primary meaning! I only hope you will let fall great compassion and break through my confusion.”

Commentary:

“World Honored One, you previously spoke the Dharma Of causes and conditions and the Arhats opened enlightenment and were certified as having attained the fruition. **Now you say that Bodhi does not come from causes and conditions.** Now you’ve done away with causes and conditions. **The spontaneity that Maskari Goshaliputra and others advocated in Rajagriha then becomes the primary meaning!”** Maskari Goshaliputra was a leader of an externalist path that propounded spontaneity. His name means “One Who Has Not Seen The Way,” (不見道 *bu chien tao*). By using causes and conditions, the Buddha destroyed the theory of spontaneity. Now that the Buddha has renounced causes and conditions, Ananda says, spontaneity must reign supreme. “**I only hope you will let fall great compassion and break through my confusion.** Buddha, I hope that with your mind of great

kindness and compassion you will bring us out of our confusion. Instruct those of us who don't recognize true principle, those of us with too much false thinking."

K2 The Thus Come One expels his deep emotion and upbraids him for attaching so tightly.

L1 He uses an analogy to expel his emotion and put forth his meaning.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "Let us take the case of Yajnadatta in the city: if the causes and conditions of his madness cease, the nature that is not mad will spontaneously come forth. The entire principle of spontaneity and causes and conditions is nothing more than that.

Commentary:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "Let us take the case of Yajnadatta in the city: if the causes and conditions of his madness cease… Can you explain the causes and conditions of his madness? If his madness ceases, **the nature that is not mad will spontaneously come forth. The entire principle of spontaneity and causes and conditions is nothing more than that.** Tell me, what aspect of his situation arose from causes and conditions, and what aspect of it was spontaneous? That's all there is to say about these two principles it's just a matter of what I have explained here."

Sutra:

"Ananda, Yajnadatta's head was spontaneously there, it was a spontaneous part of him. There was never a time when it was not. Why, then, did he suddenly fear that he had no head and start running about madly?

Commentary:

"Ananda, do you realize that **Yajnadatta's head was spontaneously there?** He never lost it, and he never got it back. **It was a spontaneous part of him.** That's just the way he was: he had a head. **There was never a time when it was not.** It wasn't that

originally he didn't have a head. **Why, then, did he suddenly fear that he had no head and start running about madly?"** His head was there; it was never lost. You tell me, then, why he got scared and said that he was afraid he didn't have a head. He frightened himself into losing his head and started running around like a mad man. What were the causes and conditions here? Where was the spontaneity?

Sutra:

"If he naturally had a head and went mad due to causes and conditions, would it not be just as natural for him to lose his head due to causes and conditions?

Commentary:

Why didn't he really lose his head?"

Sutra:

"Basically his head was not lost. The madness and fear arose from falseness. There was never any change that took place. Why, then, labor the point about causes and conditions?

Commentary:

"Basically his head was not lost. The madness and fear arose from falseness." He picked up a mirror one morning and said that he could see the eyes and eyebrows of the head very clearly in the mirror, but fretted that he could not see his own eyes and face. Madness and fear arose, and he went running crazily about. His madness and fear arose from falseness. **"There was never any change that took place."** Although he went mad and began running about in fear that he had no head, there really hadn't been any change at all. So **why, then, labor the point about causes and conditions?** What causes and conditions are you going to make out of this? Spontaneity was involved?"

Sutra:

"If the madness were spontaneous, the madness and fear would be fundamental. Before he went mad, then, where was his madness hidden?

Commentary:

“If the madness were spontaneous – if you want to argue the point and say that in fact his madness arose spontaneously of itself, **the madness and fear would be fundamental –** the madness and fear would have been there all the time. **Before he went mad, then, where was his madness hidden?** Show me the place that the madness was hiding. You can’t find it.”

Sutra:

“If the madness were not spontaneous, and his head were in fact not lost, why did he run about in a state of madness?

Commentary:

“**If the madness were not spontaneous –** were we to say his natural state he was not mad, **and his head were in fact not lost –** there was nothing false about his head; it was not a phony head in the first place **– why did he run about in a state of madness?** Why did he go mad and run about?”

Sutra:

“If you realize that you have a head and recognize the madness of your pursuit, then both spontaneity and causes and conditions become idle theories. That is why I say that the three conditions’ ceasing to be is itself the Bodhi mind.

Commentary:

“Ananda, **if you realize that you have a head –** if you understand clearly about your own head – **and recognize the madness of your pursuit**: you see that it is you who are running madly about. When you know that you have not lost your head and realize that there is no reason for you to be running crazily about, **then both spontaneity and causes and conditions become idle theories**. Talk about causes and conditions and spontaneity just becomes a joke. **That is why I say that the three conditions’ ceasing to be is itself the Bodhi mind.** When there is no more greed of killing, greed of stealing, or greed of lust in you, when you

have cut off these three causes and conditions, you have attained the Bodhi mind."

L2 Tells him repeatedly to expel absolutely all emotion.

Sutra:

"The Bodhi mind's being produced and the mind subject to production and extinction's being extinguished is simply production and extinction.

Commentary:

We refer to the Bodhi mind as being produced and the mind of production and extinction as being extinguished, but in reality they have no actual sub stance or nature.

Sutra:

"The ending of both production and extinction is the effortless Way. If there is spontaneity, then clearly it must be that the thought of spontaneity arises and the mind subject to production and extinction ceases: that, then, is still production and extinction.

Commentary:

"The ending of both production and extinction is the effortless Way. It is the great Shurangama Samadhi. **If there is spontaneity, then clearly it must be that the thought of spontaneity arises.** You should understand that if there is spontaneity, then the thought of spontaneity arises, **and the mind subject to production and extinction ceases.** You should realize that. **That, then, is still production and extinction.** If your understanding is that the mind subject to production and extinction is extinguished, then you are proposing a case of production and extinction, not a case of spontaneity.

Sutra:

"To call the lack of production and extinction spontaneity is the same as to say that the single substance formed by the combination of all mundane appearances is a mixed and united

essence, and that whatever is not mixed and united is basically spontaneous in nature.

Commentary:

"To call the lack of production and extinction spontaneity is the same as to say that the single substance formed by the combination of all mundane appearances is a mixed and united essence. Saying that spontaneity is the opposite of production and extinction is just like saying that spontaneity is the opposite of a lot of appearances in the world coming together and forming a mixed and united substance. It is like saying that a lack of mixing and uniting is spontaneity. Spontaneity in those terms is still in the realm of duality.

Sutra:

"When spontaneity is devoid of spontaneity, and mixing and uniting are devoid of their unifying quality, so that spontaneity and unity alike are abandoned, and both the abandonment of them and their existence cease to be – that is no idle theory.

Commentary:

"When spontaneity is devoid of spontaneity, and mixing and uniting are devoid of their unifying quality": the phrase, "mixing and uniting" refers to causes and conditions. When spontaneity isn't spontaneity and mixing and uniting don't have the causes and conditions of mixing and uniting, **"so that spontaneity and unity alike are abandoned"**: the two doctrines of spontaneity and of the uniting aspect of causes and conditions are each abandoned. **"And both the abandonment of them and their existence cease to be."** When One separates from causes and conditions and spontaneity, both are gone. There is no spontaneity and no causes and conditions; both dharmas are abandoned. **"That is no idle theory."** There aren't any causes and conditions and there isn't any spontaneity. Such an explanation as that is no idle theory – it's not just talking in riddles.

L3 He directly scolds him for his excessive attachment to idle theories.

Sutra:

"Bodhi and Nirvana are still so far away that you must undoubtedly pass through kalpas of bitterness and diligence before you cultivate them and are certified.

Commentary:

"Bodhi and Nirvana, those fruitions, **are still so far away that you must undoubtedly pass through kalpas of bitterness and diligence before you cultivate them and are certified.** If we look at where you are now, Ananda, Bodhi and Nirvana are very far away, indeed. You will certainly have to pass through very many kalpas, enduring a lot of suffering and toiling at great length, before you can finish cultivating and reach certification and attainment to Bodhi and Nirvana."

Sutra:

"You can hold in memory the twelve divisions of the sutras spoken by the Buddhas of the ten directions and their pure, wonderful principles as many as the sands of the River Ganges, but it only aids your idle theorizing.

"You can hold in memory, you can remember very clearly and never leave anything out, **the twelve divisions of the sutras spoken by the Buddhas of the ten directions."** I explained the Twelve Divisions of the Canon at the beginning of this Sutra. I wonder if anyone still remembers them. **"And their pure, wonderful principles as many as the sands of the River Ganges"**: In the Twelve Divisions of the Canon the doctrines are pure and inconceivable and as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, **but it only aids your idle theorizing.** Although you can remember so many sutras, it does nothing but help you concoct idle theories. It's not real.

L4 He proves to him that idle theories have no merit.

Sutra:

“You can discuss causes and conditions and spontaneity and understand them perfectly clearly, and people in the world refer to you as the one foremost in learning. You have spent aeons upon aeons saturating yourself with learning, yet you could not avoid the difficulty of Matangi.

Commentary:

I will list the Twelve Divisions of the Canon again for you:

1. Prose;
2. Repetitive verses;
3. Bestowal of predictions;
4. Interjected passages;
5. Analogies;
6. Former events;
7. Present lives;
8. Universalities;
9. Previously non-existent Dharma;
10. Unrequested Dharma;
11. Unconnected Dharma;
12. Discussions.

When I listed them, I didn’t look at any note’s or refer to any commentary. I remembered them. In the same way, those of you who are following this explanation of the Sutra should remember what you read. When you study, you should aim at remembering it. It’s a lot of bother when you don’t remember clearly what you’ve studied, so that you have to look things up before you can explain them. You should work to remember the essential parts of the Sutra.

“**You can discuss causes and conditions and spontaneity and understand them perfectly clearly.** You can remember the principles very clearly and explain them precisely. **And people in**

the world refer to you as the one foremost in learning. You have spent aeons upon aeons saturating yourself with learning. You've developed your intelligence and memory-power." Oh, now I get it. Now I know why none of you remember the things I explain. I figured it out when I reached this passage of text in the Sutra. It never occurred to me before. You've seen that Ananda was able to remember so many Sutras but that it didn't do him any good, so you have decided not to commit a single sentence to memory. You don't want to be like Ananda, who depended on erudition and neglected samadhi. That's probably it, isn't it?

He became infused with study and learning, like the incense saturates the air here in the hall. In fact, those of you who come to hear the Sutras every day may not remember what you've heard, but just think how helpful it is in ridding yourself of bad habits and faults. At the very least, when you are studying the Sutras you won't be smoking cigarettes or doing other things that are bad for you. Every day that you study you get better. Some people say that when they study they advance a little and then retreat a little, but in the final analysis, retreating from having studied is a lot better than not having studied at all. If you never take a single step forward, how could we even speak of retreat?

Yet you could not avoid the difficulty of Matangi. Although you remember so many things, you still couldn't keep out of trouble with Matangi. In other words, as soon as you see a woman, you get confused. Tell me, what use are you? No matter how many books you've read, no matter how much Buddhadharma you remember, what use is it all if you forget everything as soon as you see a woman? Why are you like that?" the Buddha asks Ananda. Ananda, no doubt, was red in the face at this point. Although he had been certified to the first fruition of Arhatship, he must have blushed when Shakyamuni Buddha asked him that question.

Sutra:

"Why did you have to wait for me to use the spiritual mantra of the Buddha's summit? The fire of lust in Matangi's

daughter's heart died instantly, and she attained the position of an Anagamin. Now she is one of a vigorous group in my dharma assembly. The river of love dried up in her, and she was able to set you free.

Commentary:

The Buddha said, "You've studied so much Buddhadharma, but you go berserk as soon as you see a woman. You lost your head, and you followed that woman right into her house, and once you got in there you were on the verge of doing some unmentionable things. What were you up to, anyway?" At this point the Buddha was like a judge cross-examining Ananda. **Why did you have to wait for me to use the spiritual mantra of the Buddha's summit** and tell Manjushri Bodhisattva to go save you? You yourself remember so much of the Twelve Divisions of the Canon; why didn't you recite them for her? Why did you lose control? You see a woman and forget everything. The way you look at it, the only thing that exists in the whole world is women.

"The fire of lust in Matangi's daughter's heart died instantly. Her sexual desire, her ignorance, instantly died, **and she attained the position of an Anagamin,** the third fruition of Arhatship." Matangi's daughter had loved Ananda. He became more important to her than her own life. She went home and told her mother that she absolutely had to trap Ananda. Her mother recited the "former Brahma-Heaven Mantra," and Ananda became confused. Actually, we say the mantra confused him, but basically the deviant cannot overcome the , proper. If Ananda hadn't had the least bit of interest in Matangi's daughter, then the recitation of the mantra would have had no effect. It's certain that Matangi's daughter caught Ananda's eye. He stole several glances at her. "What a pretty girl!" Determined not to look again, he turned his head away but gave in again and took another look. After looking her over a few times this way, the thought of the beauty of Matangi's daughter had planted itself in his mind. So when her

mother recited the mantra, Ananda followed her in a daze. If this hadn't been the case, he never would have gone along.

The Buddha realized that Ananda was on the verge of destroying the precept-substance, and so he immediately spoke the Shurangama Mantra. He commanded Manjushri Bodhisattva to take the mantra and go provide protection so that Ananda could be saved. When he got there and recited the Shurangama Mantra, Ananda's mind cleared. "How did I get here?" he wondered, and he headed directly back to the Jeta Grove in the Garden of the Benefactor of Orphans and the Solitary. He had been right at the point of intercourse with Matangi's daughter, and when Manjushri Bodhisattva arrived with the Shurangama Mantra, Ananda no doubt jumped up, threw on his clothes, and ran out. When Matangi's daughter realized he was leaving, she pursued him. "Why are you leaving at the most important moment?" she cried. So Ananda ran back to the Jeta Grove with Mantangi's daughter chasing along behind. When she arrived, the Buddha asked her, "What are you doing here?"

"I love Ananda," she replied.

"What do you love about Ananda?" the Buddha asked.

She said, "I love Ananda's nose."

"We'll cut off his nose and give it to you," was the Buddha's immediate reply.

"I love Ananda's eyes," she continued.

"We'll gouge them out and you can have them" the Buddha interrupted.

"I love Ananda's whole face," she summed up.

"That's easy," said the Buddha, "We'll just slice it off and you can take it back with you."

"If you slice it off, it won't be attractive," she protested.

"If it wouldn't be attractive then, what do you find so attractive about it now when it's still intact?"

And in the moment she took to think that over, she suddenly became enlightened and was certified to the third fruition of Arhatship. Because her love for Ananda was so extreme, she instantaneously accomplished to the fruition when the Buddha spoke that Dharma for her.

“Now she is one of a vigorous group in my dharma assembly.” The word translated as “group” here is literally “forest” in the Chinese text; it represents a gathering of people who are courageously vigorous. Let me say to all of you now that you don’t have to fear sexual attraction between men and women; all you have to do is wake up to it and realize what it’s really all about. Then there will be some hope for you. It’s just to be feared that you won’t wake up, but will be totally confused and keep going back to it, thinking it is a source of happiness. In actuality, it is really agonizing. If you really understood, you’d never do it again. But you don’t, so you think about it when you’re awake and dream about it when you are asleep and can’t leave it alone.

“The river of love dried up in her.” Love is like a torrential river which flows on ceaselessly, swirling around you on all sides. But when Matangi’s daughter heard the Buddha speak Dharma, for her the river of love disappeared. The fire of love and desire was transformed into an indestructible body of vajra. “**And she was able to set you free.”** Because Matangi’s daughter was certified to the third fruition of Arhatship, she didn’t try to hold onto you, and so now you’ve been set free.”

At this point, Ananda was still a first stage Arhat. Hadn’t even obtained the second fruition, but Matangi’s daughter went right past him and was certified to the third fruition.

In five hundred former lives, Ananda and Matangi’s daughter had been married to each other. So when she saw Ananda, it was love at first sight – she had met her husband from former lives. Her love for him was unavoidable. In fact, they probably had vows from former lives. Last life she had probably said to Ananda, “In the future, let’s always get married to each other. Let us never part.”

That's why the love between them was so strong that they fell in love as soon as they laid eyes on each other.

L5 He urges him to diligently cultivate no outflows.

Sutra:

"Therefore, Ananda, your ability to keep in mind the Thus Come One's wonderful secret teachings of aeon after aeon is not as good as a single day of no-outflow cultivation that is intent upon getting far away from the two worldly sufferings of love and hate.

Commentary:

"**Therefore, Ananda, your ability to keep in mind the Thus Come One's wonderful secret teachings of aeon after aeon –** you can remember and recite the Buddha's teachings." "Secret" means what cannot be expressed in words or conceived of in thought, that is, what is inconceivable and ineffable. "Secret" also refers to knowledge which is not shared between two people. For instance, I am unaware of a Dharma being spoken for you; and you do not realize that a Dharma is being spoken for me. It may be the same Dharma, but when one person hears it, it is one principle, whereas another person hears in it a different meaning. One explanation of a single principle is viewed differently by different people. That's what is meant by "secret"; each per son received his own benefit. "Teachings" is literally "adornments" in the text, indicating that the doctrines that the Buddha explains are extremely lofty and valuable.

"But your ability to remember so many Sutras is **not as good as a single day of no-outflow cultivation.**" It's not as good as cultivating Dharma-doors with no afflictions, Dharma-doors with no false thinking. At the level of fourth stage Arhatship there are "no outflows." Bodhisattvas also have no outflows. To have no outflows means you have cut off all your habits and faults, your ignorance and afflictions, your greed, hatred, and stupidity. The Buddha speaks of non-outflow cultivation **"that is intent upon**

getting far away from the two worldly sufferings of love and hate.” People think that love is a wonderful thing, and so there is love between men and women, love between fathers and sons. But in fact love is suffering. “I know, of course, that being apart from those you love is suffering,” you say. But even if you aren’t away from them, it’s still suffering. It’s still suffering.

When love reaches the ultimate point, it turns into its opposite, hate. Why does hate arise? Because there is love. Why does love arise? Because there is hate. And what goes on between couples and parents and children is a matter of past causes reaping effects in this present life. Some couples are as “polite as guests” to each other. They mutually respect each other. The expression in China is “She places things above her eyebrows” when she serves her husband. This refers to a wife of old who used to lift the plates of food above her eyebrows in a gesture of respect before serving them to her husband. Her husband also was particularly respectful of her, they were like close friends. There was no sticky emotion between them. So if couples have affinities from former lives, in this life they will be compatible. The husband must be careful not to do anything to offend his wife and the wife must not do anything to hurt her husband. When a couple has affinities, each helps the other out in every situation. If the wife gets sick, the husband quickly finds a doctor to treat her illness. If the husband is tired, the wife thinks of ways to make her husband comfortable.

Some couples come together because of mutual antagonism. Again, because of resentment and animosity built up from former lives, they come together in this life, and no matter what the husband says, the wife disagrees. No matter what the wife thinks, the husband disapproves. The household becomes one of complete antagonism and there is bickering and quarreling from morning to night. The husband beats his wife, and she retaliates by cracking his head open or drawing blood wherever she can, so that he’s embarrassed to be seen in public. Wouldn’t you say that this is suffering? It started out as love and turned into hate. That’s why it’s said that they are one and the same suffering.

All day long people talk about love, love, love. What love? You love day in and day out, you love until you die. But tell me, who are you going to love then? If you understand the principle, the two sufferings of love and hate don't exist. If you don't understand this principle, then both sufferings are agony. Therefore, we cultivate to be come enlightened, to understand, so that we will not be turned around by these states. So don't love and don't hate. That is the Middle Way.

L6 He reminds him of the baseness of his experience and severely scolds him.

Sutra:

"In Matangi's daughter, a former prostitute, love and desire were dispelled by the spiritual power of the mantra. Now her name in dharma is Bhikshuni 'Nature.'

Commentary:

"In Matangi's daughter, a former prostitute, love and desire were dispelled by the spiritual power of the mantra." In former lives she had been a woman of the streets, with a great amount of sexual desire. Even so, the strength of the Shurangama Mantra obliterated her emotional love. So now we know that the function of the Shurangama Mantra is to obliterate each person's love and desire. "Then I don't want to recite it any more," you retort. "I don't want my love and desire to disappear. I want to keep them around."

Keep them around? Well, that's up to you. If that's what you want, no one will force you to do otherwise. But you should also know that the Shurangama Mantra not only gets rid of emotional love and desire, it can increase your spiritual powers and your wisdom. Its power is inconceivable. Emotional love is suffering. As was just mentioned, love and hate are both suffering. Take unrequited love, for instance. People in love think of nothing else but the object of their desire to the point that they can't sleep and they lose their appetite. They keep dreaming up methods of pursuit, but in the end they never get what they want. Wouldn't you say that ceaseless thinking is suffering?

“Now her name in dharma is Bhikshuni ‘Nature.’” Her name represents her understanding of the self-nature. As soon as the Buddha spoke Dharma for her, she was immediately certified to the third fruition of Arhatship without going in sequence through the first two stages. She was certified to all three fruitions at once. It was because she saw through it, saw that love and desire are basically empty. Ananda was still stuck at the first stage while his wife of five hundred former lives went right past him.

Sutra:

“She and Rahula’s mother, Yashodhara both became aware of their past causes and knew that for many kalpas they had endured the suffering of greed and love. Because they single-mindedly became permeated with the cultivation of the goodness of no outflows, they were both freed from their bonds and received predictions. Why, then, do you cheat yourself and still remain caught up in looking and listening?”

Commentary:

“She and Rahula’s mother, Yashodhara… Rahula was the Buddha’s son, but he was not conceived through sexual intercourse. Shakyamuni Buddha was married at seventeen years old and left the home-life at nineteen. Although he married, it was not a sexual relationship. Before the Buddha left home, Yashodhara wanted to have a son by him. So the Buddha pointed to her belly and she conceived. This may sound like a myth, but this is how it is actually recorded in the Buddhist Sutras. You may want to figure out how she could get pregnant just by having him point at her, but you’ll find it’s an inconceivable and ineffable state of affairs.

Rahula’s name means “Obstacle.” Rahula lived in his mother’s womb for six years. This is another case of cause and effect. In a former life, Rahula had plugged up a mouse-hole, and it took six days for the mouse to gnaw out another passageway. As a result, Rahula had to undergo the retribution of dwelling six years in his mother’s womb.

Yashodhara, Rahula's mother's name, means "Renowned," indicating that she had a good reputation. People considered her an especially fine woman.

Matangi's daughter and Bhikshuni Yashodhara both became enlightened, and **"both became aware of their past causes and knew that for many kalpas they had endured the suffering of greed and love."** They obtained the knowledge of past lives and thus were not only aware of their former lives but knew the causes and effects of life after life from limitless kalpas past. They knew that the reason why they had not awakened for life after life was that they suffered from greed and emotional love. Matangi's daughter had been a prostitute in former lives and Yashodhara's sexual desire was not small either. However, **"they single-mindedly became permeated with the cultivation of the goodness of no outflows"** they turned the light around and became in fused with cultivation. They decided they did not want to go down the path to birth and death any longer. They wanted to turn around and cultivate the goodness of no outflows, the ultimate wholesomeness, and because of that **"they were both freed from their bonds and received predictions."** The bonds are those of greed and desire, which tie one up so one cannot get free. And those of you now who read the phrase "freed from their bonds," if you have good roots, should become enlightened, and you should wonder, "Oh, why am I still bound up in this?" And they received predictions in which the Buddha told them what time they would become Buddhas.

"**Why, then, do you cheat yourself and still remain caught up in looking and listening?** You are still attached to sounds and forms. Why are you attached to appearances? Why haven't you renounced them?"

H3 The great assembly is led to enlightenment and praises his goodness, and expresses gratitude for the benefit they have received.

Sutra:

When Ananda and the Great Assembly heard the Buddha's instruction, their doubts and delusion were dispelled. Their minds awakened to the actual appearance, they experienced "Light ease" both physically and mentally, and they obtained what they had never had before.

Commentary:

When Ananda and the Great Assembly heard the Buddha's instruction, that subtle and wonderful Dharma-door, **their doubts and delusion were dispelled.** Before this, Purna and Ananda had both had doubts and questions, as did the members of the Great Assembly. Now the Buddha's instruction had quelled their doubts. **Their minds awakened to the actual appearance.** They understood the doctrine of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, which is empty and yet not empty, the substance and principle of the actual appearance. **They experienced "light ease" both physically and mentally.** It's not easy to describe the experience of "light ease." In the same way, only one who drinks a glass of water knows whether the water is cold or warm. The experience of light ease is the initial expedient of Ch'an meditation. It occurs when one has a little bit of success; one has an extremely blissful feeling. The mind experiences great joy and the body feels very relaxed and at ease. You sit there and your legs don't hurt and your back doesn't ache and there are no false thoughts in your head; you don't know where the pain and false thoughts have gone to. And now, as Ananda and Purna and the members of the Great Assembly listen to the Buddha's explanation of wonderful Dharma, the Buddha used the Buddha-light to aid them all. Everyone then felt a most pleasing and peaceful sensation. Sometimes when you listen to the Sutras, you, too, may have this experience. The more you listen, the happier you get; the more you hear, the more you like it. "The Buddhadharma is so wonderful," you think. "Too bad I didn't hear

it sooner," and you experience boundless and limitless bliss. The Buddha used his samadhi to fill them with bliss, and **they obtained what they had never had before.**

Sutra:

Once again he wept, bowed at the Buddha's feet, knelt on both knees, placed his palms together, and said to the Buddha, "The Unsurpassed, Great, Compassionate, Pure, and Precious King has instructed me well, so that, by means of these various causes and conditions, expedients, and encouragements, all of us who were immersed in the sea of suffering have escaped it.

Commentary:

My guess is that Ananda didn't have any other talent except crying – except, of course, his erudition, his talent in hand, but crying runs a close second. Up to this point, Ananda has cried five times. Again he cried, with a flood of tears streaming down his face. **Once again he wept** and **bowed at the Buddha's feet**. He sobbed like a baby, bowing on the one hand and crying on the other. He **knelt on both knees, placed his palms together, and said to the Buddha, "The Unsurpassed, Great, Compassionate, Pure, and Precious King –** there is no one loftier than you, no one with a more compassionate mind." "Pure and Precious King" refers to the Buddha.

"The Buddha **has instructed me well.** You've used good and clever expedients to teach me, **so that, by means of these various causes and conditions, expedients, and encouragements –** you've used all kinds of expedient devices, all kinds of analogies, and very clever skill-in-means." "Expedient" dharmas are basically not true. For instance, at the beginning of his teaching, the Buddha discussed causes and conditions to destroy the theory of spontaneity propounded by adherents of externalist paths. Now he is rejecting the idea of causes and conditions, because it is really an expedient device which is, by definition, not ultimate Dharma. "Encouragements" occur, for example, when a teacher might say to a disciple, "You write characters very well; you've made a lot of

progress. You'll become very accomplished in your study of Chinese." Or, he might say, "You are sitting in Ch'an meditation a lot better these days. You used to have a lot of false thoughts, but they have subsided significantly. You're showing a little samadhi from your cultivation."

"All of us who were immersed in the sea of suffering have escaped it. All of us were really dull-witted and couldn't figure out what to do. But now we've gotten out of the sea of suffering, that is, out of emotional love and desire." Don't make the mistake of thinking those things are a garden of pleasure; they are the sea of suffering. Now that Ananda has escaped it, he's feeling a lot more relaxed, not as harried as he used to be. He is so grateful for the Buddha's compassion that he is moved to tears. It was all right for Ananda to cry then, but we here shouldn't be crying so much now. Why? Ananda cried for the sake of the Dharma, but I notice that most of the tears I see here are evidence of emotional desire. Some can't see their boyfriends, so they cry. Some can't see their girlfriends, so they cry. This crying is going on because you haven't escaped the sea of suffering, whereas when Ananda cried this time it was because he had escaped. By whose power? Shakyamuni Buddha pulled him out. So now, when we hear the Sutra, we should turn the light inward and take a good look at what we find reflected there. In what way do we differ from Ananda?

F3 He explains the method of Shamatha and causes him to deeply enter through the ear organ.
G1 He selects the organ for direct entry.
H1 Ananda expresses an analogy of seeking the door so he can enter.
I1 He tells what he has experienced from the Buddha's instruction.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, having heard the sound of dharma like this, I know that the Treasury of the Thus Come One, the wonderful, enlightened, bright mind, pervades the ten directions and includes the Thus Come One, the lands of the ten directions, and the pure, precious adornments of the land of the Wonderfully Enlightened King. Yet, the Thus Come One once

again admonishes that erudition is of no merit and is not as good as cultivation.

Commentary:

Ananda says, **"World Honored One, having heard the sound of dharma like this,** through the Buddha's guidance and instruction, **I know that the Treasury of the Thus Come One, the wonderful, enlightened, bright mind, pervades the ten directions and includes the Thus Come One, the lands of the ten directions, and the pure, precious adornments of the land of the Wonderfully Enlightened King**, the Buddha's land. Now we know that the doctrine that the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One pervades the Dharma Realm is really true. **Yet, the Thus Come One once again admonishes that erudition is of no merit and is not as good as cultivation.** The Buddha scolds me, saying that no matter how strong my memory is, it is useless if I don't reach the state of no outflows. I'll never be able to get to the essence of cultivation and develop any skill.

I1 He gives an analogy of searching for a door in a house.

Sutra:

"So now I am like a wanderer who suddenly encounters a reigning king who bestows upon him an elegant house. He has obtained a mansion, but there needs to be a door in order for him to enter it.

Commentary:

Ananda said, **"So now I am like a wanderer who suddenly encounters a reigning king."** A wanderer is someone who roams along the dry land (旅) or waterways (泊), a traveler. He's someone who goes from place to place and stops at inns. He doesn't have a house of his own. "Then, suddenly he meets someone who perhaps is the king of a country, or even an emperor, **who bestows upon him an elegant house.**" The ruling king represents the Buddha. The Buddha obviously can't be compared to a mere king, but Ananda is just using an analogy here. The elegant house the

nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. **"He has obtained a mansion, but there needs to be a door in order for him to enter it."** The house is as large as a palace, but if he doesn't even get through the door, he won't see all the beauty within. He's got the house, but there must be a door before he can get inside. This represents the fact that one may understand the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, but there has to be a method of cultivation before one can enter the nature.

Sutra:

"I only hope the Thus Come One will not withhold his great compassion in instructing those of us in the assembly who are covered over by darkness, so that we may renounce the small vehicle and attain at last the Thus Come One's Nirvana without residue, the fundamental path of resolve, and that he will enable those who still must study to know now how to subdue the age-old seeking of advantage from conditions, to obtain Dharani, and to enter into the knowledge and vision of the Buddha." Having said this, he made a full prostration, and together with the members of the assembly, he single-mindedly awaited the Buddha's compassionate instruction.

Commentary:

"I only hope the Thus Come One, Ananda, wish that you, the World Honored One, will not fail to display your compassion **in instructing those of us in the assembly who are covered over by darkness –** those who are stupid, lack understanding, and are confused." He is referring to all in the assembly who had not been certified to the fruition and become enlightened. **"So that we may renounce the small vehicle**: There is the Great Vehicle and the Small Vehicle in Buddhism. The people of present-day Burma, Sri Lanka, and Thailand still revere the dharmas of the Small Vehicle in their cultivation. The Buddha spoke the dharmas of the Small Vehicle in the beginning. After some disciples had studied these teachings, they went away to other places to propagate the Buddhadharma. Later, when the Buddha spoke the dharmas of the

Great Vehicle, they were not there to see or hear. As a result, they said that the Buddha had not spoken the Great Vehicle Dharma. The Great Vehicle was inauthentic, they claimed, something created later by others. They would not recognize it. But, here in the *Shurangama Sutra* Ananda himself beseeches the Buddha to explain to them a method whereby they can renounce the Small Vehicle.

In order to explain this, I'll tell you of a comparable situation: When I was in Manchuria, I rarely spoke and seldom conversed with any of my disciples. For one thing, it was my home town, and so everyone knew me and my origins. They knew me as "Filial Son Bai," because before I left the home-life I had practiced filial piety. When I sat by my mother's grave for three years, people looked upon me with high regard, as a model among people. Gradually I developed a bit of a reputation which extended beyond those who knew me. That was in part because I did another strange thing in those days. In the winter I did not wear cotton-padded clothing; I wore two or three single layers of cloth the year-round – the same pieces for years on end. I didn't wear socks with my open Arhat shoes, and I could also walk bare foot in the snow without difficulty. So, when people laid eyes on me, they wanted to take refuge. Through whatever places I passed, there would be several dozen, at least, who would take refuge, until every village within a hundred mile radius of my temple housed my disciples. For this reason, I rarely spoke; I just conducted myself well. When they took refuge, they were taking refuge with my manner of conduct. Wherever I went, I meditated. In Manchuria, then, although I was able to explain the Sutras, I rarely did so; I hardly ever spoke at all.

When I got to Hong Kong, I lectured the Sutras and spoke Dharma and rarely taught people how to meditate. Nor did I teach them the Dharmas of the Thousand Hands and Eyes.

Now in America I have transmitted these essential Dharmas to every "room-entering" disciple. If someone from Hong Kong came and you told them that; you study such-and such a Dharma with me,

they would say, “No, the Master doesn’t know the Dharmas of Great Compassion. How can he transmit them?” They would be like those adherents to the Small Vehicle who would not acknowledge that the Buddha spoke the Dharmas of the Great Vehicle. It’s the same principle.

Some people hold that the Dharmas of the Small Vehicle are wrong; some contend that the Dharmas of the Great Vehicle are wrong. Actually, there is no right or wrong in the Buddhadharma. All you have to do is be single-minded in your cultivation, and you can accomplish Buddhahood with any Dharma. But it must be said that the Dharmas of the Small Vehicle are predominately expedient Dharma; the Great Vehicle Dharma called the Dharma-door of Actual Appearance has perfectly fused and unobstructed doctrines. It is not something that adherents of the Small Vehicle can understand.

“And attain at last the Thus Come One’s Nirvana without residue”: the Arhat experiences Nirvana with residue. At the level of Buddhahood there is Nirvana without residue.

There is no dwelling at all;
The two kinds of death are forever gone.

In Nirvana without residue one attains the state of no production and no extinction. **“The fundamental path of resolve”** refers to the fact that the path of our cultivation upon initial resolve for enlightenment is also the Way of ultimate Bodhi which we obtain. Thus, it can be explained as both the initial path and the ultimate result.

Ananda asks the Buddha for instruction in Nirvana without residue, the fundamental path of resolve, the skill needed to begin the Dharma-door of cultivation that will bring about entry into the door of the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. He asks that the Buddha **“will enable those who still must study,”** the Arhats of the first, second, and third fruitions, **“to know now how to subdue the age-old seeking of advantage from conditions.”**

Teach us how to subdue our ignorance and affliction, how to subdue our age-old attitude of seeking advantage from conditions. Teach us how **to obtain Dharani**” **–** “dharani” is a Sanskrit word that means “uniting and holding” **– “and to enter into the knowledge and vision of the Buddha.” Having said this, he made a full prostration, and together with the members of the assembly, he single-mindedly awaited the Buddha’s compassionate instruction.”**

CHAPTER 4

The Two Decisive Doctrines

H2 The Thus Come One teaches him to deeply enter one door.
I1 He distinguishes the door by means of two decisive doctrines.
J1 He shows the wonderful path of cultivation.

Sutra:

The World Honored One then took pity on the Sound-Hearers and the Condition-Enlightened Ones in the assembly – all those who were not yet at ease with the Bodhi mind – and on all living beings to come after the Buddha's extinction during the Dharma-ending Age. He revealed the wonderful path of cultivation of the unsurpassed vehicle.

Commentary:

The World Honored One then took pity on the Sound-Hearers and the Condition-Enlightened Ones in the assembly – all those who were not yet at ease with the Bodhi mind – they were not yet enlightened **– and on all living beings to come after the Buddha's extinction during the Dharma-ending Age.** He explained this Dharma-door not only for the members of that Dharma-assembly, but for living beings in the Dharma Ending Age, which refers to us living beings right now. Don't suppose that the Buddha didn't speak this Sutra directly for us. When the Buddha was still in the world, he knew already that living beings of the

Dharma-ending Age would be difficult to tame and difficult to subdue; therefore, he reveals here the **wonderful path of cultivation of the unsurpassed vehicle**: the Great Cart of the White Ox, which the Buddha discussed in the *Dharma Flower Sutra*. The Buddha revealed this Dharma so that those of us who cultivate during the present age will be able to reach accomplishment more easily.

The period when the Buddha was in the world is called the Proper Dharma Age. This period lasted for a thousand years, and during it people were strong in Ch'an samadhi. After the Buddha had entered extinction and the thousand years of the Proper Dharma Age had passed, the Dharma Semblance Age began. It, too, lasted for a thousand years. During this period, people were strong in the building of temples and stupas. They didn't cultivate Ch'an samadhi, but sought the reward of blessings. When the Buddha was in the world, people sought wisdom, but during the Dharma Semblance Age they renounced the roots and grasped at the branches. After the Dharma-Semblance Age, came the Dharma Ending Age, when-people are neither strong in Ch'an samadhi nor strong in the building of temples and stupas. They are strong in fighting. Wherever you go in the present age, people quarrel with people, families fight with families, and countries war against countries. In every space and corner of the world there is contention and unrest. So now, when we sit in meditation and lecture on and study the Sutras, it is nothing other than the appearance of the Proper Dharma Age within the Dharma-ending Age. But we have to really do it, really practice what the Sutras teach, with out being the least bit sloppy about it. If we step forward firmly and practice it intensely, then there will be a response.

Now I'm not encouraging you, according to the method I discussed earlier, as when the Bodhisattva Manjushri encouraged Ananda and Matangi's daughter, because, in fact, your enlightenment is your own; it's not something you do for me. All I'm doing is pointing out the way to you.

J2 He explains the two decisive doctrines.
K1 A general statement.

Sutra:

He proclaimed to Ananda and to the Great Assembly, "If you want to have decisive resolve for Bodhi and not grow weary of the Wonderful Samadhi of the Buddha, the Thus Come One, you must first understand the two resolutions regarding initial resolve for enlightenment. What are the two resolutions regarding initial resolve for enlightenment?

Commentary:

He proclaimed to Ananda and to the Great Assembly – the Buddha instructed Ananda and Purna and all the Great Bodhisattvas and Arhats, **"If you want to have decisive resolve for Bodhi,** for enlightenment, **and not grow weary of the Wonderful Samadhi of the Buddha, the Thus Come One**: The word "samadhi" is transliterated from Sanskrit into Chinese in various ways, but they all represent the same word. "Wonderful Samadhi" refers to the inconceivable Shurangama Samadhi. Don't grow weary. Don't become lazy and get hung up in sleeping all day long, so that you never work at developing your skill. If you keep your spirits up and apply yourself with vigor every day, then you won't become weary. **"You must first understand the two resolutions regarding initial resolve for enlightenment.** You have to be clear about the initial resolve for Bodhi. There are two resolutions regarding this. **What are the two resolutions regarding initial resolve for enlightenment?** What is this two fold process of selection that should be made so that you will be able to know which doctrines are correct and which are incorrect?"

Purification of the Turbidities

K2 Categorizing the two doctrines.
L1 The decisive doctrine that the cause is identified with the result, the purification of the turbidities is entry into Nirvana.
M1 He causes him to look into cause and effect.

Sutra:

"Ananda, the first resolution is this: if you wish to renounce the position of Sound-Hearer and cultivate the Bodhisattva Vehicle, and to enter the knowledge and vision of the Buddha, you must carefully consider whether the resolve on the cause ground and the enlightenment on the ground of fruition are the same or different.

Commentary:

"**Ananda, the first resolution is this: if you wish to renounce the position of Sound-Hearer,** if you Sound-Hearers and Condition-Enlightened Ones want to relinquish the Small Vehicle, the two lesser vehicles, **and cultivate the Bodhisattva Vehicle,** the most supreme vehicle, **and to enter the knowledge and vision of the Buddha, you must carefully consider whether the resolve on the cause ground and the enlightenment on the ground of fruition are the same or different.** You should investigate in minute detail what the mind is which brings forth the initial resolve at the time of planting causes. The 'ground of fruition' is the state

of a Bodhisattva. Is the mind on the cause-ground and the enlightenment on the ground of fruition the same?”

Sutra:

“Ananda, it is impossible while on the cause-ground to use the mind subject to production and extinction as the basis for cultivating in quest of the Buddha vehicle, which is neither produced nor extinguished.

Commentary:

“Ananda, it is impossible while on the cause-ground, at the time you have first brought forth the resolve for enlightenment, **to use the mind subject to production and extinction,** your sixth mind-consciousness, **as the basis for cultivating in quest of the Buddha vehicle, which is neither produced nor extinguished.** If you try using the mind subject to production and extinction as the foundation of your cultivation of the Way and expect to accomplish Buddhahood and attain Nirvana with its four Virtues of permanence, bliss, true self, and purity, you will find that it is impossible. It can’t be done.”

Sutra:

“For this reason, you should realize that all existing dharmas in the material world will decay and disappear. Ananda, contemplate the world: what thing is there that will not waste away?

Commentary:

“For this reason, based on the above reasoning that you can’t seek the Buddha-Way with a mind subject to production and extinction, **you should realize that all existing dharmas in the material world will decay and disappear.** Use your wisdom to look into this: The material world is the world of dependent retribution, composed of the mountains, the rivers, the earth, and the various buildings. All of these existing dharmas will change and become extinct.

"Ananda, contemplate the world: what thing is there that will not waste away? Is there any one among all the conditioned dharmas which create form and appearance that will not spoil? Which among them will not be destroyed?

Sutra:

"But, has anyone ever heard of the disintegration of the void? Why not? It is because the void does not exist, and so it can never be destroyed.

Commentary:

"But, has anyone ever heard of the disintegration of the void? You've never heard of the obliteration of empty space. **Why not? It is because the void does not exist, and so it can never be destroyed."** The void is not some thing created or man-made. The void is fundamentally devoid of anything at all; that's why it is called emptiness. Any thing that can be made is not the void. And, since it basic ally isn't anything at all, it can't be destroyed. The void is always there.

M2 He describes the five turbidities.
N1 He explains the substance of the turbidities.

Sutra:

"While you are in your body, what is solid is of earth, what is moist is of water, what is warm is of fire, and what moves is of wind. Because of these four bonds, your tranquil and perfect, wonderfully enlightened bright mind divides into seeing, hearing, sensation, and cognition. From beginning to end there are the five layers of turbidity.

Commentary:

The Buddha now discusses the four elements. **"While you are in your body, what is solid is of earth."** The skin, flesh, muscles, and bones are the solid parts of the body. **"What is moist is of water."** Saliva, tears, blood, and secretions belong to the element water. **"What is warm is of fire."** Body heat and temperature belong to the element fire. This functions so that the body always

maintains a fairly constant temperature. **“What moves is of wind.”** Circulation and respiration belong to the element wind. **“Because of these four bonds”**: the four elements combine. They intermingle. This one gets connected with that one, and they form an independent company. Before you know it, the four elements have linked up together and formed a party called the “body bloc.” Then there is no way for your inherent Buddha-nature to appear. And so relying on truth, falseness arises. **“Your tranquil and perfect, wonderfully enlightened bright mind”**: the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, which is tranquil, the true nature of Bodhi, divides. Your wonderful enlightened bright mind separates; some of it goes to the eyes, **into seeing.** Some of it goes to the ears as **hearing**.” Thus it is said:

The original, single pure brightness,
Divides into six different aspects.

“It goes to the body and becomes **sensation**. And when it goes to the mind it is called **cognition. From beginning to end there are the five layers of turbidity.**” The four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind bring about the five layers of turbidity, the evil world of the five turbidities.

N2 A general analogy for the appearance of the turbidities.

Sutra:

“What is meant by ‘turbidity?’ Ananda, pure water, for instance, is fundamentally clear and clean, whereas dust, dirt, ashes, silt, and the like, are basically solid substances. Such are the properties of the two; their natures are not compatible. Suppose, then, that an ordinary person takes some dirt and tosses it into the pure water. The dirt loses its solid quality and the water is deprived of its transparency. The cloudiness which results is called ‘turbidity.’ Your five layers of turbidity are similar to it.

What is meant by 'turbidity?' In discussing the five turbidities I will first explain the word 'turbid' for you. **Ananda, pure water, for instance, is fundamentally clear and clean –** there is not the least bit of murkiness about it **– whereas dust, dirt, ashes, silt, and the like, are basically solid substances.** They are not transparent. **Such are the properties of the two.** These are properties of water and earth; when they are not mixed together, water is clear and dirt is solid. **Their natures are not compatible.** Water won't go along with the dirt, and the dirt won't comply with the water.

"Suppose, then, that an ordinary person takes some dirt and tosses it into the pure water." The ordinary person mentioned here is of the common, vulgar sort, a stupid worldly person who does not cultivate the Way. He doesn't have anything to do, so he goes looking for something to do. He makes a little work for himself. He takes some dirt and puts it in the water. How much dirt? Maybe a little, maybe a lot. If he has a jar of water, then he probably takes a handful of dirt. If it is a bucketful of water, he probably takes a shovelful of dirt. If he finds a whole pool of water, he will have to use a ton of earth. There's nothing fixed about it. The point is that the water and the dirt get mixed up together. It can be a little or a lot, big or small.

> *There's no big, no small, no inside, no outside.*
> *One cultivates oneself, understands by oneself,*
> *And makes one's own arrangements.*

The same principle applies here. He arranges it himself. He uses whatever amount he uses. What do you suppose happens when he throws the dirt into the water? There is a chemical reaction. **"The dirt loses its solid quality and the water is deprived of its transparency."** When the dirt hits the water it dissolves, losing its solidity. And the water which was originally clean and clear turns murky. The result is a mixture that is neither water nor dirt. This is how the science of chemistry was discovered; you should not think it is such a simple matter. **"The cloudiness which results is called**

'turbidity.' Your five layers of turbidity are similar to it." Your four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind bring about the five turbidities by the same process."

N3 He explains in detail the names of the turbidities.

Sutra:

"Ananda, you see that emptiness pervades the ten directions. There is no division between emptiness and seeing. However, although emptiness has no substance and your seeing has no awareness, the two become entangled in a falseness. This is the first layer, called the turbidity of time.

Commentary:

"Ananda, you see that emptiness pervades the ten directions. There is no division between emptiness and seeing. Can you distinguish which is your seeing and which is emptiness? Is there a line drawn between your seeing and empty space?" The meaning is that the nature of seeing and emptiness are one and the same. You can see, but basically there is not any "thing" that sees. There is no substance in evidence. The seeing is simply emptiness, and the emptiness is the seeing. **"However, although emptiness has no substance" –** "Its substance is just emptiness," someone argues. Well, get hold of that substance and let me see it. You can't grasp it. There isn't anything there after all. The seeing is just within emptiness. Yet there could never be any contention between the seeing and emptiness. Though it is present, the seeing would never demand the evacuation of emptiness. There is no clash between them. Although this is the Dharma-ending Age, strong in fighting, seeing and emptiness are not at odds.

"…and your seeing has no awareness." The seeing it self is devoid of awareness; the awareness lies with you yourself not with your seeing per se. In this situation, where the emptiness has no substance and the seeing no awareness, "**the two become entangled in a falseness. This is the first layer, called the turbidity of time.** That's how time, the kalpa, comes into being.

Ignorant worldly people with nothing in particular to do toss some dirt into clean water; and now you have gotten your seeing mixed up with emptiness in much the same way. The result is the turbidity of time." "Time" here is the word "kalpa," a Sanskrit word which is interpreted as meaning a division of time.

Sutra:

"Your body appears in full, with the four elements composing its substance, and from this, seeing, hearing, sensation, and cognition become firmly defined. Water, fire, wind, and earth fluctuate between sensation and cognition and become entangled in a falseness. This is the second layer, called the turbidity of views.

Commentary:

"Your body appears in full, with the four elements composing its substance. You cannot become liberated, and the four elements combine into your body. With this combination come the awarenesses, such as **seeing, hearing, sensation, and cognition.** The four elements cause these awarenesses to **become firmly defined. Water, fire, wind, and earth fluctuate between sensation and cognition.** They go back and forth, back and forth, and a false awareness and comprehension arise. When that happens, they **become entangled in a falseness. This is the second layer, called the turbidity of views.** The false comprehension and awareness combine yet again to form another falseness, the turbidity of views.

The explanation of the five turbities I gave earlier is entirely different from this one. That explanation was in terms of the world. This explanation is in terms of your own body. In fact, the external turbidities exist because of the five internal turbidities. By the same token, if you can get rid of your five corporeal turbidities, the five external turbidities will subside as well.

Sutra:

"Further, the functions of memory, discrimination, and verbal comprehension in your mind bring into being knowledge and views. From out of them appear the six defiling objects. Apart from the defiling objects there are no appearances. Apart from cognition they have no nature. But they become entangled in a falseness. This is the third layer, called the turbidity of afflictions.

Commentary:

"Further, the functions of memory, discrimination, and verbal comprehension in your mind bring into being knowledge and views." "Verbal comprehension" refers to study of either Buddhist texts or secular books. **"From out of them appear the six defiling objects."** These functions bring into being knowledge – the realization of things you originally didn't know – and views – the understanding of things you originally didn't understand. But the knowledge gained from books is worldly; it is not the ultimate, genuine revelations of the self-nature. Once you have knowledge, the six defiling objects – forms, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas – appear. **"Apart from the defiling objects there are no appearances."** If you separate from the wearisome dust, there are no substances or appearances. **"Apart from cognition they have no nature. But they become entangled in a falseness."** If they didn't get together, there wouldn't be any falseness Once there's a true, there's a false. Without the true there is no false. When there is the false, then there is the true. "True" and "false" are relative concepts. It's as Lao Tzu said:

Once the Great Way is gone,
humaneness appears.
Once the wise appear,
then comes great deceptiveness.
Once close relatives are at odds,
then comes the filial child.

Once the country is in turmoil,
then come the loyal ministers.

Only when the Great Way is gone do we talk about humaneness. When the Great Way is still in evidence, there is no need for a concept like humaneness. When everyone is cultivating the Way, everyone knows enough not to cause others to give rise to affliction. All know enough to respect themselves and respect others, so there's no need to speak of humaneness .

When people are all of fairly average intelligence, there is not much possibility of them cheating one another. It's only when someone intelligent appears and notices how stupid the others are by comparison that he decides he can play a trick and cheat them without their ever realizing it. So when the wise ones appear, there is great deception. If they all practiced the five-fold method of kindness between:

1) Prince and minister;
2) father and son;
3) husband and wife
4) brothers; and
5) friends,

no one would put on airs about being a kind father or a filial son. But, if the father is not kind, the child must compensate; this is when filiality arises. Or if the child is not filial, the father must compensate with kindness. Thus, "Once the close relatives are not in harmony, then comes the filial child."

How do you tell who the loyal officials are in times of peace? Who are the traitors? When the country is at peace, the loyal ministers don't wear placards which read, "LOYAL," nor does anyone brand the heads of the traitors. But when there is unrest in the country, the ministers' loyalty will reveal itself. Why is it that to this day people speak so highly of Yao Fei? It is because when the country was in turmoil he was able to combat the enemy.

The principle here in the Sutra text is the same that Lao Tze was expressing. If there were only one element involved, things would not become turbid. The one true Dharma Realm, or the Treasury of the Thus Come One, or Empty Space – that would not give rise to turbidity. But because they get together and form a bloc, a falseness arises. This proves that there is truth and falseness in everything. So, even in the Treasury of the Thus Come One, falseness comes forth from truth. In just the same way, we people have bodies which are tangible, solid objects, but in addition each of us also has a shadow. In the analogy the shadow stands for the false which arises from the true; it represents our ignorance. It is from ignorance that all our various problems arise. And here, the falseness which arises **"is the third layer, called the turbidity of afflictions."**

Sutra:

"And then day and night there is endless production and extinction as your knowledge and views continually wish to remain in the world, while your karmic patterns constantly move you to various places. This entanglement becomes a falseness, which is the fourth layer, called the turbidity of living beings.

Commentary:

"And then day and night there is endless production and extinction. Again and again your thoughts arise and cease, all day long without stopping, **as your knowledge and views continually wish to remain in the world"** "Knowledge and views" here refer to your intention, which is to remain in the world. You want to be immortal. You want to stay in this world forever and never die, **while your karmic patterns constantly move you to various places.** Your retribution body moves from one country to the next, from one land to another. **This entanglement becomes a falseness, which is the fourth layer, called the turbidity of living beings."** Because the thoughts in your mind are continually born and continually die, they are like living beings who are continually born

and continually die. It is, therefore, referred to as the turbidity of living beings.

Sutra:

“Originally, your seeing and hearing were not different natures, but a multitude of defiling objects has divided them until suddenly they became different. Their natures have a mutual awareness, but their functions are in opposition. Sameness and difference arise and they lose their identity. This entanglement becomes a falseness, which is the fifth layer, called the turbidity of a lifespan.

Commentary:

“Ananda, and all of you people who have not attained the state of being without outflows, **originally, your seeing and hearing were not different natures.** They weren’t of two sorts to begin with. They were one and the same. **But a multitude of defiling objects has divided them until suddenly they became different. Their natures have a mutual awareness, but their functions are in opposition.”** Seeing and hearing share a common knowledge. The meaning is this:

> *The original single pure brightness,*
> *Divides into six different aspects.*

So the pure, bright nature has a common awareness, but the functions of the six aspects differ. The division into six aspects calls up different functions which are in mutual opposition. Eyes can see but cannot hear. Ears can hear but they cannot see. The nose smells scents. It cannot see or hear. The tongue senses tastes and cannot smell or see or hear. **Sameness and difference arise and they lose their identity.** They have no fixed definition. Since the six sense organs have lost their mutual identity, their functions lose their accuracy. They are not the same and not different, but with regard to both aspects, there is a lack of clear definition. Hence, it says, “Sameness and difference arise and they lose their identity.”

"This entanglement becomes a falseness, which is the fifth layer, called the turbidity of a lifespan."

M3 He makes clear what he must subdue.
N1 He should decide on what to accept and what to reject.

Sutra:

"Ananda, you now want to cause your seeing, hearing, sensation, and cognition to return to and tally with the permanence, bliss, true self, and purity of the Thus Come One.

Commentary:

"**Ananda, you now want to cause your seeing, hearing, sensation, and cognition –** smelling and tasting are included here as well **– to return to and tally with the permanence, bliss, true self, and purity of the Thus Come One.** Seeing, hearing, sensation, and cognition originally arose from false conditions – Now you want to cause them to return to and tally with the Treasury of the Thus Come One and the four virtues of Nirvana: permanence, bliss, true self, and purity."

Sutra:

"You should first decide what the basis of birth and death is by relying on the perfect, tranquil nature which is neither produced nor extinguished.

Commentary:

"You want to tally with the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. **You should first decide what the basis of birth and death is by relying on the perfect, tranquil nature which is neither produced nor extinguished.** Use the perfectly fused, pure, and tranquil nature; then you can unite with the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

N2 The subduing and severing described in terms of dharma and by analogy.
O1 First he speaks of the dharma.

Sutra:

"By means of this tranquility, turn the empty and false production and extinction so that they are subdued and return to the source of enlightenment. The attainment of this source of bright enlightenment, which is neither produced nor extinguished, is the mind on the cause-ground.

Commentary:

"By means of this tranquility, turn the empty and false production and extinction. Use the tranquility of the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One to cause your empty, false nature to come back and be false no longer, **so that they are subdued and return to the source of enlightenment.** Subdue your afflictions and return to your fundamental enlightenment, **which is neither produced nor extinguished.** This **is the mind on the cause-ground** of cultivation. This is the mind you use in initial cultivation. Don't use the mind subject to production and extinction; use the perfect, tranquil nature which is neither produced nor extinguished."

Sutra:

"Then you can completely accomplish the cultivation of and certification to the ground of fruition.

Commentary:

"If on the cause-ground you use the mind which is neither produced or extinguished, **then you can completely accomplish the cultivation of and certification to the ground of fruition.**" The "ground of fruition" refers to the accomplishment of Bodhisattvahood or Buddhahood. If you apply your effort in cultivation and understand genuine principle, then you can quite naturally and very quickly cultivate and be certified to the fruition.

O2 He explains by analogy.

Sutra:

“It is like purifying muddy water by placing it in a quiet vessel which is kept completely still and unmoving. The sand and silt settle, and the pure water appears. This is called the initial subduing of the guest-dust affliction.

Commentary:

There is an analogy for cultivation and certification of the mind on the cause-ground. **“It is like purifying muddy water.”** As we just discussed, when someone throws dirt into clean water, the water turns muddy. The dirt loses its solidity, and the water loses its clarity. This represents living beings who are originally in the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, but who then get mixed up with the four elements and the five turbidities and give rise to ignorance and affliction. From the one truth arises the false. This falseness is not true; the truth is not false. It’s as I explained earlier. The true can be represented by our bodies and the false by our shadows. Is the shadow true? No. It only exists when there is a light shining on the body. The shadow then represents ignorance, be cause ignorance is also basically unreal; it is something false which arises from the true. But, because this one falseness arises, every kind of falseness arises. This can be illustrated by the analogy here of dirt being thrown into water, causing both the dirt and the water to lose their fundamental qualities and become mixed together.

Now the mind on the cause-ground cultivates to return to purity; this is like putting the muddy water **”in a quiet vessel which is kept completely still and unmoving.”** What is this quiet vessel? This represents you who sit in Ch’an. When we sit in meditation and investigate Ch’an, we are purifying the muddy water by sitting there unmoving. When we have developed samadhi-power, we pour the pure water of samadhi into our self-nature. Then your body is like the quiet vessel. But you must be completely unmoving. It’s not the case that you can move your legs at the first sign of pain, or that you can lean back and relax when your back hurts. Those of

you who stretch out your legs at the slightest inclination or stack pillows behind you in a nest have not yet learned how to conserve your blessings. You are always looking for ways to get comfortable. In America, people are forever concerned about comfort, and even in the poorest households there is a television set. We can't say this is being "completely still and unmoving." One who is still and unmoving is not afraid of anything. A little leg pain is no big deal.

"The sand and silt settle, and the pure water appears." The sand and silt represent your ignorance and affliction. When they are gone, your self-nature, represented by the pure water, appears. The water of samadhi becomes evident, and You develop some samadhi-power. This growing samadhi-power **is called the initial subduing of the guest-dust affliction."** The reason it is called "guest-dust" is that it is not real. It is the false that arises from the true. From true nature of Bodhi a false thought is produced, and from it come ignorance and affliction. "Guest-dust" means that it is not something inherent in you but is something external. The dust of ignorance and affliction is false and does not come from your self nature. Since it has no origin, it is called guest-dust affliction." It is not real.

Sutra:

"The complete removal of the mud from the water is called the eternal severance of fundamental ignorance.

Commentary:

The previous passage explained how, if muddy water is put in a quiet vessel and kept still, the sand and silt will settle to the bottom. But, if there is a **"complete removal of the mud from the water,"** if the water is put in another, clean vessel, then there is what **"is called the eternal severance of fundamental ignorance."** If you simply let the mud stay in the bottom of the vessel, saying that the water is clean, so there's no need to bother about the mud, then as soon as the vessel is moved, the mud will be stirred up again. That represents ignorance and affliction coming up again. Getting rid of the mud is called eternally cutting off basic ignorance. It takes a

long time for the sand and silt thrown into the clear water to settle to the bottom. Then to remove the sediment altogether from the water is a lot more work. But only then do you reach a state of total purity. Fundamental ignorance refers to the appearance-of-production ignorance, and it is not at all easy to get rid of. You shouldn't think it's so simple. Even a Bodhisattva at the stage of equal enlightenment has one bit of it left. When that last bit of the appearance-of-production ignorance is severed, one realizes Buddhahood.

N3 He concludes with certification to the ultimate fruition.

Sutra:

"When clarity is pure to its essence, then no matter what happens there is no affliction. Everything is in accord with the pure and wonderful virtues of Nirvana.

Commentary:

"When clarity is pure to its essence – you've gotten rid of the sediment entirely. The clarity is totally devoid of falseness; it is one hundred percent true. This represents arrival at the ultimate fruition, the accomplishment of Buddhahood-At that time there is a clear appearance. "Pure to its essence" means "devoid of any ignorance or affliction whatsoever." **"Then no matter what happens there is no affliction."** At this stage we no longer say that affliction is Bodhi, because by this time there isn't any affliction at all. When you sever fundamental ignorance there naturally is no affliction. **"Everything is in accord with the pure and wonderful virtues of Nirvana."** Everything is in harmony with the principle of no production and no extinction. Everything is pure and undefiled, like the subtle, wonderful merit and virtue of Nirvana.

Liberation of the Organs

L2 The decisive doctrine that the liberation of the organ by untying the knot is entry into the perfect penetration.
M1 He teaches him to untie the knot from within the organ.
N1 He must resolve on the most superior mind.

Sutra:

"The second resolution is this: if you definitely wish to bring forth the resolve for Bodhi and to be especially courageous and dedicated in your cultivation of the Bodhisattva Vehicle, you must decisively renounce all conditioned appearances.

Commentary:

I've finished explaining the first decisive resolution for you. **"The second resolution is this: if you definitely wish to bring forth the resolve for Bodhi –** with me here are Sound-Hearers and Condition-Enlightened Ones who have some thing left to study and who have decided to turn from the small toward the great, to make the resolve for enlightenment – **and to be especially courageous and dedicated in your cultivation of the Bodhisattva Vehicle,"** then when you bring forth the resolve for Bodhi, you should practice the Bodhisattva Way. Be courageous and fierce. Don't quickly advance and then all of a sudden retreat. Don't go forward two steps and then back three. If you are "courageous" you will be the ultimate victor. If you are "dedicated" you will be like a tiger whose attack is so strong and violent that none can withstand it. The

great generals of old, like Chu Pa Wang, were courageous and fierce in this way; they would stand until they had won and would never admit defeat. They were not afraid to die, let alone undergo every sort of difficulty. No matter how tough the enemy was, they were not afraid. **"You must decisively renounce all conditioned appearances."** Be decisive; don't waver. Don't vacillate between the Great Vehicle and the Small Vehicle, as Ananda does, unable to make up his mind. He wants to bring forth the resolve for the Great Vehicle, but he can't let go of the Dharma of causes and conditions. He says, "The Buddha's explanation of causes and conditions is really good. Why has the Buddha decided to reject it now and even to tell us not to cultivate it?" When you decide to do something, be firm about it. Don't stand with each foot in a different boat. There's a saying in China .

One person has feet in two boats;
He wants to go south on the river,
and he wants to go north.

Where do you think he'll be able to go as he stands there with each foot in a different boat? This is a prime example of indecisiveness. But now the Buddha is telling them to he decisive and renounce all conditioned appearances. The conditioned dharmas belong to the Small Vehicle. "Conditioned" refers to all creation. Anything with form and appearance is a conditioned dharma. All conditioned dharmas, anything with form and appearance, will eventually undergo destruction. Unconditioned dharmas have no form and appearance and so they can never be destroyed. Earlier in the Sutra the Buddha gave the example of empty space, asking when it would be destroyed. The answer was that it would never be destroyed, since it has no form or appearance. That was another case in which the Buddha used empty space to represent the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

N2 An analogy to show that he must know where the knot is.

Sutra:

"You should carefully consider the origin of affliction and the beginningless creation of karma and perpetuation of rebirth – who creates it and who endures it?

Commentary:

"You should carefully consider the origin of affliction. You should look into this in the most minute detail." The Buddha tells Ananda, "What is the origin of affliction?" Do we know what the origin of affliction is? Where does affliction come from, anyway? **And the beginningless creation of karma and perpetuation of rebirth"** If you can't finish things up this life, you have to be reborn and come back next life. **"Who creates it and who endures it?"** Who creates karma and who undergoes the retribution?

Sutra:

"Ananda, if in your cultivation of Bodhi you do not carefully consider the origin of affliction, you cannot realize the empty falseness of the sense-organs and sense-objects or the location of delusion. If you don't even know its location, how can you subdue it and reach the level of the Thus Come One?

Commentary:

"Ananda, if in your cultivation of Bodhi, the Enlightened Way, the Dharma of the Great Vehicle Bodhisattvas, **you do not carefully consider the origin of affliction, you cannot realize the empty falseness of the sense-organs and sense-objects.** You won't recognize the illusoriness of the four elements, the six sense-organs and six defiling objects, the five skandhas, and the like, **or the location of delusion.** You won't know where you are upside-down and where you are not upside-down. **If you don't even know its location,** if you don't understand where delusion comes from, what its origin is, **how can you subdue it?** How can you tame the upside-down ignorance and afflictions? You won't be able to do it, or to **reach the level of the Thus Come One**. If you can't subdue

it, how can you obtain the ultimate, wonderful fruition of the Thus Come One?

Sutra:

"Ananda, consider the ordinary person who wants to untie a knot. If he can't see where the knot is, how can he untie it?

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha calls out again, **"Ananda, consider the ordinary person who wants to untie a knot.** Suppose a string gets all tangled up, and someone wants to untangle it. If he can't find the knot, how can he untie it?" This passage, of course, refers to the above instruction that you must know the location of the arisal of delusion; only then can you get rid of it. If you don't even know the origin of the delusion, how can you get rid of it? If you don't know the location of what is upside-down, you cannot develop your skill in cultivation.

Sutra:

"But I have never heard that one can obliterate empty space. Why? It is because emptiness has no form or appearance; therefore there are no knots to untie.

Commentary:

Now the Buddha brings up an example of something without any knots to be untied. What is it? He says, **"But I have never heard that one can obliterate empty space.** I've never heard of anyone smashing empty space or slicing it into little pieces. **Why? It is because emptiness has no form or appearance; therefore there are no knots to untie.** The nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One inherent in you is the same as empty space."

N3 He tells him that the organ is actually the knot.

Sutra:

"But now your visible eyes, ears, nose and tongue, as well as your body and mind, are like six thieving matchmakers who plunder the jewels of your household.

Commentary:

"But now your visible eyes, ears, nose and tongue, as well as your body and mind, are like six thieving matchmakers." People think that the six sense-organs are helpful, but actually it is just these six destructive things that steal the Dharma-jewels of our self-nature. But you still don't realize this. You consider the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind to be your best friends. Who would have guessed that these six are what invite the thieves into the house. They **plunder the jewels of your household."**

For instance, your eyes catch sight of something. Be fore you saw it, everything was fine. As it says:

What the eyes don't see,
the mouth won't hanker for.
What the ears don't hear,
the mind won't commit offenses about.

Someone is eating something and you see it, and you grow a hand in your throat which reaches out, grabs the thing, and eats it. Why does the mouth become so gluttonous? Because the eyes see something good to eat. You say your eyes help you because they enable you to see things, but just because you see things you give rise to a lot of affliction. For instance, you see something or someone beautiful and you want it. But once you get it, it's a source of affliction. And if you don't get it, that's affliction, too, because you just keep chasing after it.

The ears hear some pleasant sound and they become greedy to hear more. Once greed arises, then if you haven't got what you want, you think of ways to get it, and if you do get it, you are afraid of losing it. So the ears bring you a lot of affliction, too. To "plunder the jewels of your household" just means to lead you to give rise to afflictions. If you are without any affliction, you will not lose the gems of your household, but once you give rise to affliction, your gems are gone. As it says,

The firewood gathered in a thousand days,
Goes up in a single blaze.

By the same token, you cultivate for a thousand days and all the progress you make – perhaps a state of light ease – will disappear with the first evidence of affliction, the first signs of ignorance. It is said:

A spark of fire burns down a forest of
merit and virtue.

When your nose smells something fragrant, your mind gets greedy. When your tongue tastes a fine flavor, you also give rise to greed. The body comes in contact with objects of touch. Some objects of touch bring pleasant sensations, and some bring unpleasant ones. The mind conditions dharmas. In short, because of your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, you give rise to various kinds of afflictions, and the gems of your household are all taken away from you.

We speak about no outflows. Well, the six consciousnesses that are produced by the interaction of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind with their defiling objects are what are called outflows. If you can reach the level where,

The eyes see shape and form,
but inside there is nothing;
The ears hear the defiling sounds,
but the mind does not know of them,

then you will not be plundered by thieves. But if you don't have the required skill; if you lack samadhi-power; if you chase after the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind and cannot return the light and illumine within, then you have outflows and are being robbed of your inherent wealth.

The six sense-organs are described here as "thieving match-makers." It used to be in China that weddings had to be arranged

through a matchmaker. In early Chinese history, during the Chou Dynasty, prior to the Lieh Kuo, there were no matchmakers. People just found their own mates in the way that is customary in the West today. In fact, during the Chou Dynasty things between men and women were extremely casual. There were no rules to speak of at all. Then Confucius revised and edited *The Six Classics*: *The Book of Poetry*, *The Book of History*, *The Book of Changes*, *The Book of Rites*, *The Book of Music*, and *The Spring and Autumn Annals*. From then on there had to be a matchmaker whose job it was to select men and women who were well suited for one another. Then, if they were about the same age and size, overtures would be made. "Such-and-such a young lady is very virtuous." "Such-and-such a student is very intelligent." Once the introductions were complete, everything was arranged.

Here, the use of the word "matchmaker" in the text carries much the same meaning. The six sense-organs interact with the six defiling objects, and between them the six consciousnesses arise. The communications that occur between the sense-organs, the sense-objects, and the consciousnesses are a lot like the job of a matchmaker. The match is made and the involvement happens before anyone realizes that a thief is present. But the thief steals your wealth of merit and virtue. It plunders the gems of your household.

What are the gems of your household? You should know that yourself. Whatever you take to be your gems, you should carefully protect. I don't know what your gems are, and you don't know what my treasures are.

"I know what my gems are," you say. "They are gold, silver, and diamonds."

No, they're not. Although I don't know what your gems are, I do know that if you think those are your gems, you're mistaken.

"Well, what are my household gems, then?" you wonder.

So now you yourself don't know what they are? Even though you don't know, I can tell you, although I'd rather not. But since

you want to know, I think I should comply and tell you, except that I'm afraid you won't believe me. Do you see what a spot I'm in? I can't figure out if it's better to tell you or not. If I tell you and you don't believe me, then I've wasted some energy. But if I don't tell you when you want to know, there's always the chance that you might believe me. So now I've decided to tell you. What are your treasures? They are simply the pure nature and bright substance of your eternal true mind within the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

The Buddha-jewel of your self-nature, the Dharma-jewel of your self-nature, and the Sangha-jewel of your self-nature are your gems, too. Also, in your own physical being you should cultivate precepts, cultivate samadhi, and cultivate Wisdom, as they, too, are the gems of your household. The light of your enlightened nature is also a true gem of your household.

"I can't even see those things; how can I lose them?" You ask.

"Ah, that's the very reason I didn't want to tell you. You don't believe what you can't see, and so it's no wonder you don't believe this, because it really is an invisible thing. But you have some sense of awareness, even though you can't see it. If your awareness is coupled with wisdom, you will have more jewels. If you are stupid, however, you will lose your jewels. Examine yourself: are you wise or stupid? This is not to say, though, that you should stand up and announce that you have wisdom like the Buddha's, like a certain person who calls himself a Patriarch. All I did with him was to say I was going to kill him, and he fled in terror. Next time you meet up with a person like this, just beat him up from head to foot, and if he cries, "Why are you beating me?" you can answer, "I'm just beating empty space, since you basically don't exist, right? How can you be aware of pain? If you are aware of pain, you're no different from an ordinary person, and you can't compare yourself to the Buddha. If you aren't aware of the pain, then you're just a block of wood or a piece of rock. You don't have any sensation, so you're just like excrement." Tell him that, and say, "Take my advice and don't go

around acting crazily the way you have been. Don't go around saying, 'I'm just like the Buddha without any difference. I am the Buddha, I am a Patriarch.' If you do that, in the future you will fall into the uninterrupted hells." Such people are insane; how can they cultivate and accomplish Buddhahood? Have you ever heard of a crazy Buddha? No. Crazy people like that cannot enter the Buddhadharma because they are already immersed in the views of heavenly demons and externalist ways. The Buddha himself cannot save such people. They are really a pitiful lot.

Sutra:

"And, thus, from beginningless time living beings and the world have been bound up together, so that the material world cannot be transcended.

Commentary:

"And, thus, from beginningless time living beings and the world have been bound up together." The six sense organs, the six defiling objects, and the consciousnesses in between communicate back and forth until they are as dependent upon one another as the two beasts, *lang* and *pei*. The *lang* has the use of its two front legs, and the *pei* has the use of the two back legs. So the *lang* and the *pei* have to work together in order to walk. If they aren't in harmony, the *lang* can't move, and the *pei* can't go anywhere by himself, either. The same kind of interdependence is required of the six sense-organs, the six sense-objects, and the six consciousnesses between them. They play the same kind of trick. From time without beginning there has been the continuity of the world and the continuity of living beings. The two get stuck together until living beings can't get out of the world, and the world can't exist without living beings. They are glued together, **"so that the material world cannot be transcended."** The "material world" refers to all the mountains, the rivers, the great earth, the buildings, and other man-made objects. "Living beings" refers to the realm of sentience. Eventually living beings cannot separate themselves from the material world, and the material world cannot

be free of the sentient world. The material world draws in the sentient world, enticing it until the two interlock and cannot transcend one another. So there is a definite interdependence among the continuity of living beings, the continuity of the world, and the continuity of karmic retribution. Without any living beings, there would be no world; without any world, there would be no karmic retribution. To have a world there must be karmic retribution and there must be living beings. If one does not exist, none exist.

N4 He shows the efficacy of the six organs.
O1 He asks about and explains what living beings and time and space are.

Sutra:

"Ananda, what is meant by the time and space of living beings? 'Time' refers to change and flow; 'space' refers to location.

Commentary:

"**Ananda,** now I'll ask you, 'What is meant by 'living beings?' What is meant by time and space?' Do you know?" Ananda didn't answer, so the Buddha explained it for him. **"What is meant by the time and space of living beings? 'Time' refers to change and flow; 'space' refers to location."** Time and space in Chinese are rendered here as *shih* (世) and *chieh* (界) respectively. This compound also means "world."

Sutra:

"You should know by now that north, east, south, west, northeast, northwest, southeast, southwest, above and below are space. Past, present, and future are periods of time. There are ten directions in space and three periods of time.

Commentary:

You should know by now that north, east, south, west – the four directions – and **northeast, northwest, southeast, southwest – the four intermediate directions – as well as **above and below are**

space. Past, present, and future are periods of time. There are ten directions in space and three periods of time.

O2 He calculates its inherent efficacy step by step.

Sutra:

"All living beings come into being because of false interaction. Their bodies go through changes and they are caught up in time and space.

Commentary:

"All living beings come into being because of false interaction. These false appearances become involved with each other. **Their bodies go through changes."** It's like a small commercial enterprise or trade center. You give me something in return for something you don't have. **"And they are caught up in time and space."** They are caught up in the "world." You may not see it, but there is a definite connection between one's physical body and the world. People's bodies are a small business, and their interaction with the world is big business. In this way they keep appearing and disappearing, as their involvement forever grows.

Sutra:

"However, although there are ten directions in space, those known in the world as north, south, east, and west are the only ones that can be clearly fixed. Above and below have no position; the intermediates have no definite direction. Determined clearly to be four in number, they are then combined with the three periods of time. Three times four, or, alternately, four times three, make twelve.

Commentary:

"However, although there are ten directions in space, those known in the world as north, south, east, and west – everyone knows them – **are the only ones that can be clearly fixed.** Most people speak of only four directions. **Above and below have no position; the intermediates have no definite direction.** When you

say something is in between, what are you relating it to? You can't establish a fixed middle. **Determined clearly to be four in number –** everyone agrees on this; it's very obvious **– they are then combined with the three periods of time. Three times four, or, alternately, four times three, make twelve.**" Here we have fixed the number of the world – the three periods of time and the four directions.

Sutra:

"Increase it three times: itself multiplied by ten and again by ten, to reach the thousands: one thousand two hundred is the greatest possible efficacy of the six organs.

Commentary:

"Increase it three times. Consider twelve three ways: as **itself**, that is, twelve; **multiplied by ten**, which makes one hundred and twenty; **and again by ten**, which makes one thousand two hundred; this is **to reach the thousands: one thousand two hundred is the greatest possible efficacy of the six organs."** Beginning with twelve and increased to a maximum of twelve hundred: this is the limit of the efficacy of each of the six organs – the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind when they interact with the world. The "increase (by) three times" has to do with the three kinds of continuity – of living beings, of the world, and of karmic retribution.

Sutra:

"Ananda, you can thereby establish their value. For example, the eyes see darkness behind and light in front. The front is totally light; the back is totally dark. With your peripheral vision included, you can see two thirds around at most. Therefore, its capacity can be expressed as an efficacy which is not complete. One third of its efficacy is without virtue. Know, then, that the eyes have an efficacy of only eight hundred.

Commentary:

This is the way Shakyamuni Buddha explained the Sutra. The meanings will be explained as the Sutra continues. Don't be nervous at this point. "**Ananda, you can thereby establish their value.** You can decide for yourself which of the six organs are superior and which are inferior.

"**For example, the eyes,** which potentially have an efficacy of twelve hundred, **see darkness behind and light in front."** They can see what's in front, but not what's behind. Of course, this does not refer to the Buddha-eye. A person with the Buddha-eye can see not only in front, but behind, to both sides, above, and below – he can see the entirety of empty space. That's not at issue here, because we are talking about the ordinary flesh-eye at this point. **The front is totally light; the back is totally dark. With your peripheral vision included, you can see two thirds around at most.** You can't see all the way around. **Therefore, its capacity can be expressed as an efficacy which is not complete. One third of its efficacy is without virtue.** You can see in front and to the sides, but you can't see behind. **Know, then, that the eyes have an efficacy of only eight hundred."** They are not a superior organ since they don't use the entire potential of their efficacy.

What is being explained now is explained in preparation for the instruction given by the twenty-five sages when they discuss their perfect penetration. Each has selected an organ for perfect penetration.

O3 He reveals the range of efficacy of the six sense-organs.

Sutra:

"For example, the ears hear everywhere in the ten directions, without loss. They hear movements, whether far or near, and stillness without bounds. Know, then, that the organ of hearing is complete with an efficacy of twelve hundred.

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha told Ananda, **"For example, the ears hear everywhere."** The ears' sensation of hearing is unobstructed. They're not like the eyes, which use only a part of their potential. The organ of hearing reaches everywhere – to the front, back, left, and right, and above, below; wherever there is a sound, it can hear it **in the ten directions, without loss.** There's nothing the ears cannot hear. **They hear movements, whether far or near, and stillness without bounds. Know, then, that the organ of hearing is complete with an efficacy of twelve hundred.**

Sutra:

"For example, the nose smells odors with each inhalation and exhalation of the breath. It is deficient at the point between the inhalation and exhalation. The organ of smell can be considered to be deficient by one third. Know, then, that the nose has an efficacy of only eight hundred.

Commentary:

"For example, the nose smells odors. it has the ability to smell, **with each inhalation and exhalation of the breath. It is deficient at the point between the inhalation and exhalation.** Between inhaling and exhaling there is a moment's pause during which no smelling takes place. **The organ of smell can be considered to be deficient by one third.** It is also deficient by one third. **Know, then, that the nose has an efficacy of only eight hundred."**

Sutra:

"For example, the tongue can proclaim the entirety of worldly and transcendental wisdom. Although language varies according to locality, the principles go beyond boundaries of any kind. Know, then, that the organ of the tongue is complete with an efficacy of twelve hundred.

Commentary:

Basically, the tongue is the organ of taste but that is not its only function. Here the tongue's ability to speak is discussed. **"For example, the tongue can proclaim the entirety of worldly and transcendental wisdom."** The tongue can speak Dharma; it can express both worldly and world-transcending dharmas. **Although language varies according to locality –** there are differences in language and dialect **– the principles go beyond boundaries of any kind."** When the Patriarch, Bodhidharma, came from India to China, he was confronted by the language barrier. The Chinese did not understand his language so they nicknamed him "The Barbarian," as an expression of their prejudice. Most people wouldn't even speak to him, and those who tried didn't understand much of what he had to say, so no matter where Patriarch Bodhidharma went, no one paid any attention to his teaching of the Buddhadharma. That being the case, he went to Loyang to Bear's Ear Mountain and sat in meditation facing a wall. This was a case of a language barrier preventing someone from establishing conditions with people.

Although the languages differ, the principles are inexhaustible. **"Know, then, that the organ of the tongue is complete with an efficacy of twelve hundred."**

Sutra:

"For example, the body is aware of touch, registering it as pain or pleasure. When it makes contact, it is aware of the thing touched; when in isolation, it has no tactile knowledge of other things. Isolation has a single and contact has a dual aspect. The organ of the body can be considered as deficient by one third. Know, then, that the body has an efficacy of only eight hundred.

Commentary:

"For example, the body is aware of touch; the body senses physical contact, **registering it as pain or pleasure.** You find some kinds of contact undesirable and some enjoyable. **When it makes contact, it is aware of the thing touched.** When the organ of the

body and the object which is external to it come together, there is an awareness of contact. **When in isolation, it has no tactile knowledge of other things.** When the contact is withdrawn, there is no knowledge of it; one is unaware of it. **Isolation has a single and contact has a dual aspect.** In isolation we be come an individual entity; when we come in contact with something, there is an experience of touch – either painful or pleasurable. **The organ of the body can be considered as deficient by one third.** Of the potential efficacy of twelve hundred, it is deficient by one third. **Know, then, that the body has an efficacy of only eight hundred.**

Sutra:

"For example, the mind silently includes all worldly and transcendental dharmas of the ten directions and the three periods of time. Regardless of whether it be sagely or ordinary, everything is included in its boundlessness. Know, then, that the organ of the mind is complete with an efficacy of twelve hundred.

Commentary:

"For example, the mind silently includes all worldly and transcendental dharmas of the ten directions and the three periods of time." The realm of the five defiling objects has just been discussed. The "mind" here refers to the sixth mind-consciousness. The mind is quiet, but in its discriminations it encompasses all the dharmas of the world and what is beyond the world. "**Regardless of whether it be sagely or ordinary, everything is included in its boundlessness. Know, then, that the organ of the mind is complete with an efficacy of twelve hundred.** The mind also fulfills its entire potential of twelve hundred efficacies."

N5 He teaches him to enlighten and perfectly enter.
O1 He causes him to investigate and enlighten to the perfection of the six.

Sutra:

"Ananda, now you wish to oppose the flow of desire that leads to birth and death. You should turn back the flow of the organs to reach a state of neither production nor extinction.

Commentary:

The Buddha again calls to Ananda, **"Now you wish to oppose the flow of desire that leads to birth and death."** You don't want to follow along with that flow any more but want to develop the skill to oppose the flow. **You should turn back the flow of the organs to reach a state of neither production nor extinction.** You want to return and find the source of the flow of birth and death.

Sutra:

"You should investigate all of these six functioning organs to see which are uniting, which are isolated, which are deep, which are shallow, which will penetrate perfectly, and which are not perfect.

Commentary:

You should first figure out which organ penetrates the most perfectly, without obstruction, and which organ will not lead to perfect penetration.

Sutra:

"Once you have awakened to the organ which penetrates perfectly, you should thereupon reverse the flow of its beginningless involvement in false karma. Then you will know the difference between one that penetrates perfectly and one that does not. Then a day and an aeon will be one and the same.

Commentary:

"Once you have awakened to the organ which penetrates perfectly, if you can find the source of birth and death and oppose

the flow of karma, you will know which organ penetrates most perfectly. **You should thereupon reverse the flow of its beginningless involvement in false karma.** You don't have to comply with the flow of birth and death, you can counteract it. **Then you will know the difference between one that penetrates perfectly and one that does not.** When you understand which organ penetrates most perfectly, and if you then cultivate, **Then a day and an aeon will be one and the same.** Before you understood about the perfect organ, you could have cultivated for an aeon and still not become a Buddha. Once you understand the perfect organ which is not subject to birth and death, you can cultivate for one day, and it will equal the cultivation of a great aeon.

O2 He causes him to enter one and liberate six.

Sutra:

"I have now revealed to you the fundamental efficacy of the tranquil perfect brightness of these six. This is what the numbers are; it is up to you to select which one to enter. I will explain more to aid your progress in it.

Commentary:

"I have now revealed to you the fundamental efficacy of the tranquil perfect brightness of these six. I have explained the principle very clearly for you. The basic nature of these six is very still and pure. I have told you the extent of the efficacy of each organ. You know now which organs function with the greatest capacity and which are less efficient. **This is what the numbers are; it is up to you to select which one to enter.** I have explained to you the degree of each organ's potential. It's up to you, Ananda, to make a careful choice in deciding which one can be entered. See which organ you respond to." Basically, it's already been made clear that the organ of hearing penetrates most perfectly, but the Buddha is not going to tell Ananda that directly. He's going to let Ananda pick it out. The Buddha simply stated the degree of each organ's capability and leaves it up to Ananda to make the choice. And that's what he tells him now. **"I will explain more to aid your**

progress in it.” After you have made your selection, I will explain things for you in greater detail. I will reveal to you how to work with that organ in order to advance in your cultivation.”

Sutra:

“The Thus Come Ones of the ten directions cultivated by means of all of the eighteen realms and obtained perfect, unsurpassed Bodhi. All of them were generally adequate.

Commentary:

“The Thus Come Ones of the ten directions”: The Buddha brings up the Tathagatas of the ten directions as certification. They **cultivated by means of all of the eighteen realms and obtained perfect, unsurpassed Bodhi. All of them were generally adequate.** The five skandhas, the six entrances, the twelve places, and the eighteen realms: of these, none was more adequate than any other.”

Sutra:

“But you are at an inferior level and are not yet able to perfect comfortable wisdom among them. Therefore, I shall give you an explanation, so that you will be able to enter deeply into one door.

Commentary:

“But you are at an inferior level. The Thus Come Ones of the ten directions become perfected by means of the five Skandhas, the six entrances, the twelve places, and the eighteen realms and can obtain unsurpassed Bodhi through any of them. For them, any one of these is as adequate as any other. None is less effective. But you are different, your root-nature is inferior at this point. You re still very stupid and **are not yet able to perfect comfortable wisdom among them.** You can’t choose just any one of the five skandhas, the six entrances, the twelve places, or the eighteen realms and obtain through it the wisdom that is perfect and masterful. **Therefore, I shall give you an explanation, so that you will be able to enter deeply into one door.** I will explain the workings of

each organ for you until you understand how to enter deeply into one door.”

Sutra:

“Enter one without falseness, and the six sense organs will be simultaneously pure.”

Commentary:

“Enter one without falseness: you enter deeply into one organ to the point that the false is gone and the purity is absolute. When one organ is without falseness, **the six sense organs will be simultaneously pure.** They will all become pure and comfortable at the same time.

M2 He instructs him to untie the knot and enter perfect penetration.
N1 Ananda restates the Buddha’s words and asks for benefit.

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, how do we oppose the flow, enter deeply into one door, and cause the six organs to simultaneously become pure?”

Commentary:

Ananda still didn’t really understand what he had heard the Buddha say, and so he asked the Buddha about it. **Ananda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, how do we oppose the flow…** What do you mean by opposing the flow of birth and death? How do we **enter deeply into one door…** Which door should we enter into deeply? Where is this door How do we **cause the six organs to simultaneously become pure?** How do we enter one without falseness and thereby cause all the six organs to be pure at once? What’s the principle involved here?”

N2 The Thus Come One answers the question with a multifold statement.
O1 The knot of delusion is deep.

Sutra:

The Buddha told Ananda, “You have already obtained the fruition of a Shrotaapanna. You have already extinguished the

view-delusions of living beings in the three realms, but you do not yet know that your organs have accumulated habits that are without beginning. It is through cultivation that one severs not simply these habits, but also their numerous subtleties as they pass through arisal, dwelling, change, and extinction.

Commentary:

The Buddha told Ananda, "You have already obtained the fruition of a Shrotaapanna, the first fruition of Arhatship." "Shrotaapanna" means "Entering the Flow" – entering the flow of the Dharma-nature of a sage. It also means "Opposing the Flow" – of the six defiling objects that ordinary people experience. The *Vajra Sutra* explains the four fruitions very clearly. It says that one who "enters the flow" does not enter forms, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, or dharmas. "Not entering" means one is not turned around by the six sense-objects. Whether what people at this stage see is beautiful or not beautiful, their minds are not moved, because they have already severed the eighty-eight categories of view-delusion. They are not moved by anything they see, hear, smell, or otherwise perceive. This stage of Arhatship is also called "Preparing for the Flow" of the sage.

"You have already extinguished the view-delusions of living beings in the three realms." This refers to the eighty-eight categories of view-delusion. **"But you do not yet know that your organs have accumulated habits that are without beginning.** These habits have been piling up for numerous lives and numerous aeons. **It is through cultivation that one severs not simply these habits, but also their numerous subtleties as they pass through arisal, dwelling, change, and extinction.** There are all sorts of divisions, sections, interrelationships, circumstances, and causes and conditions. It is by cultivating that you can sever the habits of many aeons.

O2 The one and the six are due to falseness.

Sutra:

"You should now contemplate the six organs further: are they one or six? If you say they are one, Ananda, why can't the ears see? Why can't the eyes hear? Why can't the head walk? Why can't the feet talk?

Commentary:

The Buddha says to Ananda, **"You should now contemplate the six organs further: are they one or six?** You ask me why are all the six organs pure when one organ is free of falseness? But take a look now: are they six or one? Are they one or six? **If you say they are one, Ananda –** if you say that the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind are of a single substance **– why can't the ears see? Why can't the eyes hear?** What's the reason that eyes can only see things and cannot hear them? **Why can't the head walk?** If they were a single substance, the feet could walk and the head could, too. The eyes could see and could also hear, if they were one substance. **Why can't the feet talk?"** That reminds me of the man who came to visit yesterday and said he was the American Patriarch. I told him that he was indulging in "intellectual talk-Zen," to which he replied that his was "intellectual foot-zen." He thought his answer was really wonderful. Here, the Buddha asks Ananda, "Why can't the feet talk?"

Ultimately, are the ears capable of seeing? They are. Are the eyes capable of hearing? They are. Is it possible for the head to walk? No, the head can't walk. Is it possible for the feet to talk? No, the feet can't talk. How can you say that the ears can talk and the eyes can hear? This principle is something which each person must come to know for himself or herself. A person who has experienced it understands this principle of the mutual functioning of the six organs. But Ananda is now only a first-stage Arhat, so he has not yet experienced the simultaneous inter-functioning of the six sense organs. The mouth, too, can not only speak, but can also see and hear.

"Dharma Master," someone protests, "the things you say aren't even in the sutras. You're just blabbering nonsense."

There are a lot of things that aren't found in the sutras. If the sutras fully explained it all, there would be no need for commentaries such as mine. As to the sutras, the printed words are black, the paper is white, and if you pursue the sutras simply of themselves, you're running after something that's dead, not something that's alive.

Although we say the Sutra is like a road,
and can be recited,
It has no direct relation
to your very life!

If you want to end birth and death, you have to use the mind not subject to production and extinction in your cultivation of the Way. The sutra is something subject to production and extinction. In the future, the sutras will disappear. The very first to go will be the *Shurangama Sutra*. In the Dharma-ending Age, the first to disappear will be this Sutra, and that's why I like to lecture it wherever I go. Every time it's explained, people come to understand a little more of its principles. That's why I really like to lecture.

Ananda hadn't experienced the mutual functioning of the six sense-organs, because he had not yet reached the fourth stage of Arhatship. When one reaches that level, the eyes can eat and the ears can talk. Isn't that wonderful?

What was originally one pure brightness,
Divides into six separate functions.

When these six separate functions return to the one original brightness, one experiences the mutual functioning of the six. If you believe such a state exists, that's fine. If you don't believe it, just relax. Eventually you will come to believe it. When it happens to you someday and you exclaim, "How is it my ears can talk?"

then you will believe it – At that time you'll know that your teacher was not cheating you after all.

You will have this experience when your six sense organs function in mutual accord. Before that happens, however, you shouldn't be obsessed with false thinking about it to the point that you decide to train your ears to talk. It's not something you can train your organs to do. Actually, you can train them if you want to, but do it by sitting in meditation and investigating dhyana. You have to develop your skill through hard work. You can't fear the pain in your legs or the ache in your back. Nor should you think it's something you can't do. Anyone can become a Buddha.

All living beings have the Buddha-nature.
All can become Buddhas.

Above all, you should learn the Shurangama Mantra by heart. We recite it twice every day in this Shurangama Sutra Study Session, which will probably last nearly three months – seventy days, at least. That's one hundred forty recitations of the mantra – let's say one hundred fifty in total. You should be able to memorize it in that many recitations. If you can't, you won't be allowed any excuses!

Sutra:

"If the six organs are definitely six, then as I now explain this subtle, wonderful dharma-door for you in this assembly, which of your six organs is receiving it?"

Ananda said, "I hear it with my ears."

The Buddha said, "Your ears hear by themselves, what, then, does it have to do with your body and mouth? And yet you ask about the principles with your mouth, and your body displays veneration.

Commentary:

"If the six organs are definitely six – if there's no doubt about it **– then as I now explain this subtle, wonderful dharma-door**

for you in this assembly – I am expounding for you the rare, wonderful, and inconceivable Dharma-door of the Great Shurangama Samadhi **– which of your six organs is receiving it?** Since your six organs are definitely divided into six, which of them receives the Dharma I am speaking?" That's what he asked Ananda.

Ananda didn't even stop to consider. He just impulsively answered the Buddha. **Ananda said, "I hear it with my ears."** He only mentioned the organ of hearing.

The Buddha said, "Your ears hear by themselves, what, then, does it have to do with your body and mouth? Your ears themselves do the hearing, and so it doesn't have anything to do with your body and mouth. **And yet you ask about the principles with your mouth-**why do you use your mouth to ask about the doctrines? Whether or not you understand what you hear shouldn't have anything to do with your body or mouth, because, after all, they are separate organs. They are not one. **And your body displays veneration.** You are upright and attentive to represent your respect for the Dharma. Therefore, if you say they are six separate entities, why are these other two cooperating like this?

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that if they are not one, then they must be six. And if they are not six, they must be one. But you can't say that your organs are basically one and six.

Commentary:

"**Therefore,** because of the foregoing, **you should know that if they are not one, then they must be six**: If they aren't one, they are six. **And if they are not six, they must be one. But you can't say that your organs are basically one and six.** You can't say they are both one and six."

Sutra:

"Ananda, you should know that these organs are neither one nor six. It is from being upside-down and sinking into involvements throughout time without beginning that the

theory of one and six has become established. As a Shrotaapanna, you have dissolved the six, but you still have not done away with the one.

Commentary:

"Ananda, you should know that these organs – the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind **– are neither one nor six. It is from being upside-down and sinking into involvements throughout time without beginning** until the present **that the theory of one and six has become established.** It arose be cause relying on the truth, you gave rise to falseness and brought about ignorance and delusion in your self-nature. You end up sinking into involvements. You say, 'You give me this, and I'll give you that': that's the way you get involved. It's like opening a big company with a main head quarters and branches. Because of delusion and involvements, the theory of one and six became established in the profoundly tranquil nature of the Thus Come One's Treasury, in the eternal true mind. **As a Shrotaapanna**: Ananda, you have obtained the fruition of a first-stage Arhat." The definition of a first-stage Arhat is one who does not "enter into" forms, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, or dharmas. **"You have dissolved the six.** You are not turned around by the six defiling objects. You wouldn't say, 'Is that food good to eat?' You wouldn't have that thought. Or, when looking at a form, you wouldn't say, 'That's really beautiful."' As soon as one thinks "beautiful," one becomes attached; and one races after that beautiful thing. How far one runs, no one knows. One mile, two, three, four, or is it a hundred or two hundred miles? Who knows how far you will run after beauty? That's being turned by the defiling objects of form.

As to smelling fragrances, I remember a time in Manchuria when I was reciting the Great Compassion Mantra with over a dozen of my disciples. We were kneeling as we recited, and after we'd said the mantras more than two hundred times, the entire room filled with a rare fragrance. There weren't any flowers in the room or anything else that would emit such a fragrance. In fact, the

fragrance was out of this world, not like anything we'd ever smelled before. One of my disciples got greedy and began sniffing loudly and muttering, "How sweet, how fragrant!" The more he sniffed, the more fragrant it was, and the more he wanted to smell it.

I said to him, "You're here reciting the Great Compassion Mantra. Don't go chasing after scents."

The tongue tastes flavors. One time I accompanied an experienced old cultivator to a layperson's house for a meal offering. This old cultivator supposedly possessed the status of elder years and lofty virtue in the Way. But when we were served the food, he remarked to me, "This food is really good. It's my favorite kind. Do you like it?"

I said, "I don't know what it tastes like."

"Oh? Haven't you eaten any?"

"I ate it, but I don't know what it tasted like," I said.

"Well, if you don't recognize tastes, haven't you turned into a piece of wood?"

"But I ate," I retorted. "Wood can't eat. The reason I don't know what it tasted like is that I just ate my fill, I didn't pay attention to its flavor." But as a result of that conversation, I thought to myself: "Such a lofty old cultivator, and he's still expending his energy on food and drink. He's attached to what is good to eat and what is not. What's to be done?" Now the *Shurangama Sutra* discusses "dissolving the six." How do you do it? Once you are certified to the first fruition of Arhatship, you get rid of that level of experiencing. Your eyes don't seek after beauty, your ears don't register fine sounds, your nose isn't greedy for fragrances, your tongue doesn't crave flavors, your body doesn't become attached to objects of touch, and your mind isn't aware of dharmas.

"But you still have not done away with the one." What is "the one?" It represents his attachment to dharmas, an attachment that still remains. Although forms, sounds, tastes, objects of touch, and

dharmas have been dissolved, the attachment to dharmas has still not been severed.

O3 He uses an analogy to clarify the dharma.

Sutra:

"It is like emptiness fitting into differently shaped vessels. The emptiness is said to be whatever shape the vessel is. But if you get rid of the vessel and look at the emptiness, you will say it is one and the same.

Commentary:

"Ananda, why is it that you have revolved head over heels on the wheel of rebirth from time without beginning and have given rise to these six organs which cannot be called one and cannot be called six? What's the reason? I'll bring up another analogy as further substantiation. **It is like emptiness.** That is, it's like our nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, which is no one else's but ours. It's like putting emptiness **into differently shaped vessels.** In emptiness we make a lot of square vessels, and round vessels, and triangular vessels, and hexagonal vessels, and octagonal vessels. When we set them in emptiness, the emptiness becomes triangular, and square, and hexagonal, and octagonal, and round. **"The emptiness is said to be whatever shape the vessel is."** Ultimately, though, did the emptiness change? It did not. It was just because the vessels were different that the emptiness took on different shapes. **"But if you get rid of the vessel and look at the emptiness, you will say it is one and the same."** The emptiness is still just one. In fact, it isn't even one. If it were one, it wouldn't be emptiness. And that's the way the Treasury of the Thus Come One is. The addition of the vessels is the existence of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

The fundamental, single, pure brightness,
Divides into six separate functionings.

That's why you can't say they are six and you can't say they are one. They are neither one nor six. They are just like the great void. If you're just like the great void, why do you want to retain so much ignorance and affliction? It's just because you won't reject these that you cannot perceive your original face. And, since you cannot realize your original face, you can't reach the ultimate understanding.

Sutra:

"But how can that emptiness become alike and different at your convenience? Even less can it be one or not one. Therefore, you should understand that the six receptive functioning organs should be the same way.

Commentary:

But how can that emptiness become alike and different at your convenience? How can you say that emptiness becomes the same or different? You can't say that, because emptiness is fundamentally unchanging. **Even less can it be one or not one.** How can you make it one or not one? In emptiness there isn't anything at all." That's why it's said:

The self-nature is like emptiness
Both true and false are within it.

Based on the true, the false arises, and when the false vanishes, the true appears. If you don't get rid of the false, the true won't appear. So in our cultivation we have to put an end to what is false. It's also said:

Dust it today and scrub it tomorrow.
Rub it and polish it until it's like a mirror.

What is referred to here is the self-nature, expressing the same principle that the Great Master Shen Hsiu expressed in his famous verse:

The body is a Bodhi tree,
The mind like a bright mirror stand.
Time and again brush it clean,
And let no dust alight.

The line "Time and again brush it clean" refers to the kind ¡f diligence that is necessary during cultivation. People criticize this verse, saying it is incorrect. It's not in correct; it simply describes what is essential during cultivation of the Way. The Great Master Hui Neng, the Sixth Patriarch, wrote this verse in answer:

Originally Bodhi has no tree.
The bright mirror has no stand.
Originally there is not a single thing,
Where can dust alight?

This verse describes the experience of a person who has been certified as having attained the fruition of sagehood. Thus, people who have not accomplished the fruition of sagehood should study the Great Master Shen Hsiu's verse. Those who have been certified to the fruition should follow the verse of the Great Master, the Sixth Patriarch.

Yesterday that "American Patriarch" came and contended that the Sixth Patriarch said there is nothing profound and nothing shallow. That's an example of having a superficial knowledge without understanding the underlying reasons, and using it to indulge in intellectual talk-Zen. When I called him on this, he said his was "foot-Zen." As I told you, he thought his answer was very clever, but I thought to myself, "You came out here from New York in a broken-down car, but since you didn't have to walk, you say you have 'foot-Zen.'" The only trouble was that his "foot-Zen" didn't get him anywhere when he got here.

"Therefore, you should understand that the six receptive functioning organs should be the same way." I was explaining a four-line verse for you, and there are still two lines left. But I'm not

a rakshasa ghost who wants to eat you. I'm not even hungry at the moment, so I'll finish the verse. Do you remember it?

The self-nature is like emptiness.
Both true and false are within it.
When you awaken and fathom all dharmas,
To penetrate one is to penetrate them all.

That refers to the method discussed here of entering deeply into one door. If you enter one and awaken to its falseness, all six organs are purified.

O4 He states that the knot of the organs is because of the defiling objects.

Sutra:

"Seeing occurs because the two appearances of darkness and light, and their like, firmly adhere to quietude in what originally was wonderful perfection. The essence of seeing reflects form and combines with form to become an organ. In its pure state the organ of the eye is the four elements. And yet it takes the name 'eye-organ' and is shaped like a grape. Of the superficial sense-organs and the four defiling objects, this one races out after form.

Commentary:

"Seeing occurs because the two appearances of darkness and light, these two kinds of form, **and their like,** including all other kinds of visible forms, influence one another. They **firmly adhere to quietude in what originally was wonderful perfection.** These forms stick to the tranquil nature. When this situation arises, the essence of seeing comes into being. **The essence of seeing reflects form and combines with form to become an organ."** "Combines" here echoes "adhere to" above. The essence of seeing and forms adhere to each other and turn into an organ. **"In its pure state the organ of the eye is the four elements."** What is meant by "its pure state?" It means that the four elements are here very subtle, not something which the flesh-eye can see. One needs the

Buddha Eye, the Dharma-Eye, and the Wisdom-Eye to be able to see them. The “form elements” still refer to earth, water, fire, and wind. **“And yet it takes the name ‘eye-organ’ and is shaped like a grape.”** “And yet” – because the elements are related in this way, the substance is an eye shaped like a grape. **“Of the superficial sense-organs and the four defiling objects…”** The eye is distinguished in three ways:

It has a seeing-essence;
It is a superior organ;
It is a superficial defiled organ.

If you cultivate successfully, the eye is called a superior organ. If you do not cultivate, it is called a superficial defiled organ. The four defiling objects referred to here are form, sound, smells, and tastes. **“This one races out after form.”** The Chinese word for “races” (流逸) combines the character (流), which means “flowing” like a swift river returning to the deep, or like the undertow of waves on the ocean, and the character (逸), which means “unrestrained,” like a fire raging out of control in the mountains, spreading in all directions at once. Together they mean “to race,” like a thoroughbred horse. That is the way one races out to become attached to forms.

Sutra:

“Hearing occurs because the two reverberations of movement and stillness, and their like, firmly adhere to quietude in what originally was wonderful perfection. The essence of hearing reflects sound and resounds with sound to become the organ of the ear. In its pure state, the organ of the ear is the four elements. It takes the name ‘ear organ’ and is shaped like a fresh, curled leaf. Of the superficial sense-organs and the four defiling objects, this one is loosed upon sound.

Commentary:

“Hearing occurs because the two reverberations of movement and stillness, and their like, firmly adhere to

quietude in what originally was wonderful perfection. Because there is movement and stillness, a function is created in their midst – when this function occurs in the perfect quietude – the process of hearing comes into being. **The essence of hearing reflects sound and resounds with sound to become the organ of the ear.** It unites with the defiling object of sound. It becomes an organ in the same way the eye became one, as described above. **In its pure state, the organ of the ear is the four elements.** It is a certain process which results from the combination of the four elements. **It takes the name 'ear organ' and is shaped like a fresh, curled leaf.** It is shaped like a fresh lotus-flower leaf, which has not yet uncurled. **Of the superficial sense-organs and the four defiling objects, this one is loosed upon sound.** Discussing the sense organs in terms of their being superficial and defiled, this organ races out and unites with sound."

Sutra:

"Smelling occurs because the two appearances of penetration and obstruction, and their like, firmly adhere to quietude in what originally was wonderful perfection. The essence of smelling reflects scents and takes in scents to become the organ of the nose. In its pure state, the organ of the nose is the four elements. It takes the name 'nose-organ' and is shaped like a double hanging claw. Of the superficial sense-organs and the four defiling objects, this one probes out after scents.

Commentary:

"Smelling occurs because the two appearances of penetration and obstruction, and their like, firmly adhere to quietude in what originally was wonderful perfection. With the existence of the two substantive appearances of penetration and obstruction, a function occurs in the wonderful perfection of the mind. The appearances adhere to produce smelling. **The essence of smelling reflects scents and takes in scents to become the organ of the nose.** The essence of smelling and the defiling objects of scents mirror one another, and the process of smelling, of taking in

the scents, becomes the function of this organ. **In its pure state, the organ of the nose is the four elements.** But it is given a **name 'nose-organ' and is shaped like a double hanging claw.** The nose looks like two inverted claws. **Of the superficial sense-organs –** seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing **– and the four defiling objects –** forms, sounds, scents, and flavors**-this one probes out after scents.** This one gets involved with the defiling objects of scents. The nose smells and is greedy for scents.

Sutra:

"Tasting occurs because the two blends of blandness and variety, and their like, firmly adhere to quietude in what originally was wonderful perfection. The essence of tasting reflects flavors and becomes entwined with flavors to become the organ of the tongue. In its pure state the organ of the tongue is the four elements. It takes the name 'tongue-organ' and is shaped like the crescent moon. Of the superficial sense organs and the four defiling objects, this one pursues flavors.

Commentary:

"Tasting occurs because the two blends of blandness and variety, and their like, firmly adhere to quietude in what originally was wonderful perfection." Blandness refers to the ordinary tastelessness we experience. And from this normal state of blandness, one can perceive the flavor of something when one encounters it. Because of the involvement of blandness and the change to perception of a flavor and their blending together, there is an adherence to the quietude of the wonderful, perfect mind. The function is the awareness of taste. **"The essence of tasting reflects flavors and becomes entwined with flavors to become the organ of the tongue."** The sense of taste becomes twisted together with flavors, just as strands of a rope are bound together. They become inseparable, and thus another organ comes into being. **In its pure state the organ of the tongue is the four elements. It takes the name 'tongue-organ' and is shaped like the crescent moon. Of**

the superficial sense organs and the four defiling objects, this one pursues flavors. It is attracted to flavors."

Sutra:

"Sensation occurs because the two frictions of separation and union, and their like, firmly adhere to quietude in what originally was wonderful perfection. The essence of sensation reflects contact and seizes upon contact to become the organ of the body. In its pure state, the organ of the body is the four elements. It takes the name 'body-organ' and is shaped like a tabla. Of the superficial organs and the four defiling objects, this one is compelled by contact.

Commentary:

"Sensation occurs because the two frictions of separation and union, and their like, firmly adhere to quietude in what originally was wonderful perfection. The rubbing back and forth of separation and union creates an awareness in the wonderful perfection. **The essence of sensation reflects contact and seizes upon contact to become the organ of the body.** The awareness unites with the contact to make the organ of the body. **In its pure state, the organ of the body is the four elements. It takes the name 'body-organ' and is shaped like a tabla.** The body is likened in shape to that particular kind of drum. **Of the superficial organs and the four defiling objects, this one is compelled by contact.** This superficial sense-organ gravitates to the defiling object of contact.

Sutra:

"Knowing occurs because the two continuities of production and extinction, and their like, firmly adhere to quietude in what originally was wonderful perfection. The essence of knowing reflects dharmas and grasps dharmas to become the organ of the mind. In its pure state, the organ of the mind is the four elements. It takes the name 'Mental Cognition' and resembles seeing in a dark room. Of the superficial sense-organs and their four defiling objects, this one chases after dharmas.

Commentary:

"Knowing occurs because the two continuities of production and extinction, and their like…" Here the text discusses the organ of the mind, the sixth mind-conscious ness, which is subject to production and extinction. As the former thought ceases, the next thought arises. The one races after the other, and they firmly **"adhere to quietude in what originally was wonderful perfection."** They stick to the quietude and create the essence of knowing. **The essence of knowing reflects dharmas and grasps dharmas to become the organ of the mind.** The capacity of knowing seizes upon dharmas, which are defiling objects. **In its pure state, the organ of the mind is the four elements. It takes the name 'Mental Cognition' –** rather than mental "substance," because the mind is not a substantive thing **– and resembles seeing in a dark room."** Since the mind organ is an "internal" organ, whereas the five previous sense organs are "external" organs, it is likened to seeing in a dark room. **"Of the superficial sense-organs and their four defiling objects, this one chases after dharmas.** The mind gravitates to the defiling objects of dharmas.

Sutra:

"Ananda, in this way the six organs occur, because that bright enlightenment has a brightness added to it. Thus they lose their essence and adhere to falseness and create light.

Commentary:

"Ananda, in this way the six organs – the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind discussed above **– occur, because that bright enlightenment…"** "That" refers to the wonderful perfection of the true mind, the Treasury of the Thus Come One. Originally the six organs are the Treasury of the Thus Come One, but they come into being because the Treasury of the Thus Come One **"…has a brightness added to it."** Basically the fundamental substance of enlightenment is brightness itself; there is no need to add brightness to it. It is like the wish-fulfilling pearl, the light of which is inherent in it; there is no need to add light to it. When light

is added to enlightenment, it creates a false bright ness, a false enlightenment. The brightness is not ultimately real, nor is the enlightenment that results from the addition of brightness. **"Thus they lose their essence and adhere to falseness and create light."** Their original essence – the essence of seeing, the essence of hearing, the essence of smelling, of tasting, and of touching, and the knowledge of dharmas – loses its original characteristic and capability, and thereby it becomes mixed up with false brightness and false enlightenment. From this mutual adhesion, a false light comes forth. This light it not really a light; it simply designates their individual functions.

O5 He states that when the defiling objects disappear, the organ is gone.
P1 He explains that untying the knot is the answer to the question.
Q1 He surmises that apart from the defiling objects there is no knot.

Sutra:

"Therefore, apart from darkness and light there is no substance to seeing for you now; apart from movement and stillness, there, basically, is no disposition of hearing; without penetration and obstruction, the nature of smelling does not arise; in the absence of variety and blandness, tasting does not occur, lacking separation and union, the sensation of contact is fundamentally non-existent; without extinction and production, knowing is put to rest.

Commentary:

"Therefore": Because of the doctrine explained above, which is that one need not add brightness to enlightenment; it is only through the arisal of a false thought of adding brightness to enlightenment that it turns into false bright ness and false enlightenment – as a result, the original essence is lost, and by an adhesion to falseness, the light of the category of seeing comes into being. This creates the separate functions of seeing, hearing, and their like. It belongs to the light of the eighth consciousness. Therefore, **"apart from darkness and light there is no substance to seeing for you now."** The reason you can see is because the conditions of light and

darkness aid you. Without darkness and light, the substance of seeing would cease to be. **"Apart from movement and stillness, there, basically, is no disposition of hearing."** "Disposition" here also means substance. **"Without penetration and obstruction, the nature of smelling does not arise."** Without these conditions you have no awareness of scents; you wouldn't know if something was fragrant or stinking. **In the absence of variety and blandness, tasting does not occur.** In an interval between experiencing variety and blandness, the awareness of tasting would be gone. **Lacking separation and union, the sensation of contact is fundamentally non-existent.** If there is no impulse to separate or to unite, the awareness of contact disappears. **Without extinction and production, knowing is put to rest.** If there isn't any production and there isn't any extinction, where does your knowing-nature abide? It is gone as well.

Q2 He teaches him to enter one and liberate six.

Sutra:

"You need only not follow the twelve conditioned appearances of movement and stillness, union and separation, blandness and variety, penetration and obstruction, production and extinction, and brightness and darkness.

Commentary:

"You need only not follow": This section of the Sutra text is very important Why haven't people become enlightened? Because they follow the course of birth and death. They cannot go against this current. They follow false, defiling objects and are turned around by them. They cannot gain control over the false defiling objects. Thus, the Sutra says, "You need only not follow" them, you need to not accord with the realm of the six defiling objects and to not be turned around by them. You don't have to follow conditioned appearances and be turned around by them. Then you can go against the current. Don't follow **"the twelve conditioned appearances of movement and stillness, union and separation, blandness and variety, penetration and obstruction, production**

and extinction, and brightness and darkness.” Don’t be turned around by these twelve conditioned dharmas.

Sutra:

“Accordingly, extract one organ from adhesion, free it, and subdue it at its inner core. Once subdued, it will return to inherent truth and radiate its innate brilliance. When that brilliance shines forth, the remaining five adhesions will be freed to accomplish total liberation.

Commentary:

“Accordingly, extract one organ from adhesion, free it: Of the six sense-organs of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, you should accordingly liberate one, freeing it from the circumstance of its adhesion, **and subdue it at its inner core.** Overcome the ignorance in yourself. Sub due this false thought. **Once subdued, it will return to inherent truth.** With the false thought and ignorance subdued, you will return to the source, to the wonderful perfection, the quietude of the true mind, **and** it will **radiate its innate brilliance.** Then the inherent brightness of enlightenment will reveal itself. **When that brilliance shines forth,** when the brilliant essence reveals this brightness **the remaining five adhesions will be freed to accomplish total liberation.”** When one sense-organ is freed, the others which are stuck will be pulled loose and liberated, as well. They will simultaneously obtain liberation. And the function of adhering to create seeing, adhering to create sensation, will cease. You will be free.

P2 His accomplishment of the two wonders is testified to and looked into.
Q1 In the sentient realm, liberation from the bond brings the wonder of mutual functioning.
R1 First he reveals the wonder.

Sutra:

“Do not follow the knowing and seeing that arise from the objects before you. True brightness does not comply with the sense-organs. Yet, lodged at the organs is the revelation of the

brightness that permits the mutual functioning of the six organs.

Commentary:

I have discussed the mutual functioning of the six organs before. **"Do not follow the knowing and seeing that arise from the objects before you."** This is the advice that the Buddha gave above: "You need only not follow." Don't follow the six defiling objects that pair themselves with your seeing, knowing, and their like. If you don't follow along, you will see as if not seeing, and hear as if not hearing, because you are not obsessed by the realm of the six defiling objects. **"True brightness does not comply with the sense-organs."** It does not make an encounter with a defiling object and thus bring brightness into existence. Awareness doesn't exist in that way. Your own enlightened brightness does not follow the organs and race out. "And **yet, lodged at the organs is the revelation of the brightness that permits the mutual functioning of the six organs.**" Our inherent enlightened brightness is nevertheless found at the gate of the six organs. When that inherent brightness reveals itself, it "permits the mutual functioning of the six organs." This doesn't happen if you use false brightness and false enlightenment; it only happens when you use the true brightness of true enlightenment. And then the six organs – the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind – function in mutual accord. They can be used interchangeably. The eyes can speak and the ears can see.

Today is the Buddha's "Happy Day." Now, of course, the Buddha is happy every day, but today he is happiest. Why? This is the last day of the summer retreat for people who have left the home-life. From the 15th of the fourth lunar month to the 15th of the seventh lunar month left-home people do not travel. Today is also the anniversary of the day Mahamaudgalyayana obtained the spiritual penetration of the Heavenly Eye. Upon obtaining it, the first thing he did was to look where his mother was. He saw she was in the hells undergoing suffering. How did his mother get into the

hells? When she was alive she did not believe in the Buddha, didn't bow to the Buddha. She didn't believe in the Dharma, she didn't study the Buddhadharma. She did not respect the Sangha; she even slandered members of the Sangha and talked about their transgressions. She also like to eat meat and fish. She especially liked fish eggs. Just think of how many lives are taken in one helping of caviar. Because she did not believe in or revere the Triple Jewel, and because she ate so many fish eggs, she went to the hells after she died. In the hells there was nothing to eat. So when Maudgalyayana obtained his spiritual penetrations, he went to give a bowl of rice to his mother. His mother took the bowl of rice when she saw it, and because she was so greedy, she held the bowl in her left hand and covered it with her right sleeve, so that none of the other hungry ghosts would see it and try to steal it from her. She hid it under her sleeve and ran to where she could be alone to eat. But her karmic obstructions were such that she could not have things to eat, and so when she put a bite of food in her mouth, the food turned to burning coals. Although Maudgalyayana had been certified to the fruition and had spiritual penetrations, he was unable to help her. Nothing he did worked. So he went to the Buddha to seek help. "What can be done?" he pleaded. His mother was in the hells and he asked the Buddha to help him save her.

The Buddha told him, "Your mother's karmic offenses are too heavy. You cannot save her by yourself. You must ask the assembled Sangha of the ten directions to save her, and then she can leave suffering and obtain bliss." And, so from that time on, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month in the lunar calendar, offerings are made not only to help your mothers of this life to leave suffering and obtain bliss, but to take across your fathers and mothers from seven lives past and all your close relatives as well. The Dharma Assembly which commemorates the way in which the assembled Sangha helped save Maudgalyayana's mother is called Ullumbana.

R2 He cites certification to not following the sense organs.

Sutra:

"Ananda, don't you know that now in this assembly there is Aniruddha, who is blind and yet can see; the dragon, Upananda, who is deaf and yet can hear; the spirit of the Ganges River, who has no nose and yet smells fragrance; Gavampati, who has an unusual tongue and yet senses flavor; and the spirit, Shunyata, who has no body and yet is aware of contact? In the light of the Thus Come One, this spirit is illumined temporarily as an ethereal essence without any substance. In the same way, there is also Mahakashyapa in this assembly, dwelling in the samadhi of extinction, having obtained the stillness of a Sound-Hearer. He has long since extinguished the mind-organ, and yet he has a perfectly clear knowledge which is not due to the mental process of thinking.

Commentary:

"Ananda, don't you know that now in this assembly, in the Shurangama Dharma Assembly, there are people who possess the mutual functioning of the six organs? One is **Aniruddha."** You remember him; he was the one who went blind trying to stay awake. Aniruddha was the Buddha's cousin, the son of the White Rice King. He liked to sleep, and he fell asleep every time the Buddha lectured the Sutras. The Buddha scolded him for this habit, saying:

Hey! Hey! How can you sleep,
Like an oyster or a clam?
Sleep, sleep for a thousand years,
But, you'll never hear the Buddha's name.

After that scolding, in a burst of zeal, Aniruddha didn't sleep for seven days and nights. He finally went blind from lack of sleep. The Buddha took pity on him and taught him the Vajra Samadhi of Delight in Seeing the Illuminating Brightness. Upon cultivating this dharma he obtained the penetration of the Heavenly Eye. His

ordinary eyes were useless, but he became foremost in the Heavenly Eye. Heavenly Eye was perfect; he could see everything very clearly. You shouldn't think that "opening one's eyes" is the same in all cases. Some people see things clearly, and some not so clearly. Aniruddha saw the most clearly of all. Here in the text, the Buddha reminds Ananda of "Aniruddha, **who is blind and yet can see.**"

Aniruddha's name means "Free of Poverty." (流逸) I have told you before how he obtained a golden rabbit. When he cut off one of its legs to buy food with, he found that another golden leg grew back in its place. Every time he removed a section of the golden rabbit, the section grew back, and so he was never poor again.

The Buddha also mentions, **"The dragon, Upananda, who is deaf and yet can hear."** This dragon-spirit protects the city of Magadha, watching so that the winds and rains are in accord with the season. He was well liked by the people of that city, and that's why he has the name Upananda, "Well Liked" (善歡喜). Although deaf, this dragon could listen with his whiskers instead of his ears. So Aniruddha didn't use his eyes and yet could see, and Upananda didn't have the use of his ears and yet could hear. This is the mutual functioning of the six organs that I've been discussing.

There is also **"the spirit of the Ganges River, who has no nose and yet smells fragrance."** The **Ganges**, the **Sindhu**, the **Vakshu**, and the **Sutlej** Rivers all rise in the Himalayas. This river spirit of the Ganges has no nose, but she can still smell things. She uses her eyes to smell with.

There is **"Gavampati, who has an unusual tongue and yet senses flavor."** Gavampati's name means "Cow Cud" (牛呞). Even when he wasn't eating, he kept chewing his cud and breathing coarsely like a cow. Why would someone who had been certified to the fruition of Arhatship have such a habit? It's a result of something that happened to him when he was on the cause-ground as a novice. At that time he cultivated with an old monk who was certified as an Arhat, but who in his old age had lost his teeth and,

as a consequence, ate very slowly. He chewed so slowly that one day Gavampati, the novice, said to him, “You eat like a cow.” It was because of that one sentence that he had to undergo the retribution of chewing his cud like a cow for life after life. But now he had been certified to the fruition of Arhatship, so the Buddha instructed him to reside in the heavens, rather than in the human realm, for fear that someone would slander him in turn and say, “You eat like a cow,” with the result that another person would end up having to be a cow for life after life. This should show you how careful you must be when you talk. You can’t just say whatever pops into your head. If you say one wrong thing, you’ll fall in accordance with the laws of cause and effect.

There once was an elder Bhikshu whom someone asked, “Do great cultivators fall in accordance with cause and effect?”

The elder cultivator replied, “Great cultivators do not fall in accordance with cause and effect.” Because that one sentence was incorrect, he had to undergo rebirth as a fox for five hundred lives. When Ch’an Master Pai Chiang was at Chiang Hsi lecturing the Sutras, there was an old man with a long beard who came to listen every day. No one knew who he was. He always left as soon as the lecture was over. The lectures were open to the public, of course, so no one asked him who he was; he was free to come and go with everyone else. In lecturing sutras, the rule is for the Dharma Master to return to his room immediately after he finishes lecturing. He should engage in conversation very rarely, lest he end up seeking advantage from conditions. He should not linger after the lecture in order to invite people to come back again, or the like. One day, then, when Ch’an Master Pai Chiang was returning to his quarters after the lecture, the old man with a long beard followed him and asked for instruction. His question was, “Does a great cultivator fall in accordance with cause and effect?”

Ch’an Master Pai Chiang answered, “Great cultivators are not unclear about cause and effect.” The old man immediately became enlightened.

“Oh, so that’s the way it is’” he exclaimed. Then he explained, “I am a fox who lives on the mountain behind here. Every day I come to listen to the sutras, but I’ve never understood this principle.” Then he explained that in the past he had been a high monk who had also lectured the sutras, but when someone had asked him that question, he had answered incorrectly, and as a result had to undergo five hundred lives as a fox. “Now that today I have finally understood, tomorrow I will go be reborn. You could come back to my cave and bury my corpse in order to establish affinities.”

The next day, Ch’an Master Pai Chiang, taking all the monks from the monastery with him, went back on the mountain to have a look. Sure enough, they found the corpse of an old fox. Ch’an Master Pai Chiang buried it with the ceremony used for monks and crossed him over. This is another example of how careful one must be in what one says. People who don’t understand the principles of Buddhadharma tend to say whatever they feel like, but people who study the Buddhadharma know better than to do that. If someone asks you a question and you know the answer in terms of Buddhadharma, you can reply. But if you don’t know, I exhort you not to think you know when you don’t. If you say something wrong, the effect will be severe.

Because of one careless remark to an Arhat, Gavampati had to bear the retribution of chewing his cud like a cow for life after life. His tongue was like a cow’s, too; nevertheless, he sensed flavor.

There is **“and the spirit, Shunyata, who has no body and yet is aware of contact.”** Shunyata means emptiness. This emptiness-spirit has no physical body and yet senses touch. How does that happen? **“In the light of the Thus Come One, this spirit is illumined temporarily as an ethereal essence without any substance.”** The light of the Buddha enables this Spirit to appear temporarily, even though she is as empty as the wind and has no body at all. But when she is able to appear through the Buddha’s power, she, too can experience the sensation of contact. That makes

the spirit Shunyata very happy, "I really don't have a body, but now I've got one!" Beings are afraid of being without a body, and so when this spirit is allowed to manifest, she is delighted.

"In the same way, there is also Mahakashyapa in this assembly, dwelling in the samadhi of extinction." This is the ninth successive stage of samadhi, the extinction of the skandhas of thought and feeling. He had **"obtained the stillness of a Sound-Hearer."** Some members of the assembly had put an end to the skandhas of feeling and thought and some had been certified as having attained the fruition of Arhatship. Who in the assembly has obtained the samadhi of extinction? "Maha" means "great," and refers to the elder Kashyapa, who had used to be a fire worshipper. In Buddhism he is known as the "Golden Ascetic" (金色仙). He is now in samadhi in China at Chi Tzu Mountain in Yunnan Province. He hasn't died and gone off to rebirth. He is in the samadhi of extinction, and in the future, when Maitreya Bodhisattva appears in the world, Mahakashyapa will present him with the robe and bowl of Shakyamuni Buddha. He's been in samadhi now for some three thousand years, but one can sit for thousands, or even tens of thousands of years, in that samadhi without any problem.

"He has long since extinguished the mind-organ, and yet he has a perfectly clear knowledge which is not due to the mental process of thinking." His discriminating mind, which is subject to the production and extinction of thoughts, was long ago put to an end. Yet, his knowledge is complete and sharp; it does not result from thoughts in the mind, but springs from his fundamental wisdom."

Q2 In the material realm, transcendence of it brings the wonder of sudden enlightenment

R1 First he reveals the wonder.

Sutra:

"Then, Ananda, after all your organs are completely freed, you will glow with an inner light. All the ephemeral, defiling

objects and the material world will thereupon change their appearance like ice which is melted by hot liquid. In response to your mind, they will transform and become the knowledge and awareness which is unsurpassed enlightenment.

Commentary:

"Then, Ananda, after all your organs are completely freed – if you can enter one, the other five will also cease to be. The six organs will be purified simultaneously. If you can perfect one organ completely, then the six organs will be freed from their particular habits, and **you will glow with an inner light.** Your self-nature will glow like a lustrous and flawless piece of jade. **All the ephemeral, defiling objects and the material world –** the mountains, rivers, great earth, dwellings, buildings, and so forth – **will thereupon change their appearance like ice which is melted by hot liquid.** They will disappear, just as ice does when boiling water is poured on it. **In response to your mind,** in a very short period of time, **they will transform and become the knowledge and awareness which is unsurpassed enlightenment."** When the false ceases to be, the true is pure. The "know ledge and awareness" referred to here is the true and actual knowledge and awareness, not the false knowing and awareness spoken of above. When the false is gone, the true appears; "in response to your mind" it reveals itself.

R2 He verified that they do not rely on conditions.

Sutra:

"Ananda, it is like an ordinary person who has confined seeing to his eyes. If you suddenly have him close his eyes, he will see darkness before him. The six organs and his head and feet will be enveloped in total darkness. If the person traces the shape of external things with his hands, then even though he cannot see, he will recognize someone's head and feet if he feels them. This knowledge and awareness are the same way.

Commentary:

“Ananda, it is like an ordinary person. Let me give you an example. Consider a worldly person **who has confined seeing to his eyes.** He has gathered the seeing-essence into his eyes. **If you suddenly have him close his eyes, he will see darkness before him.** You say to him, “Shut your eyes immediately!” Suddenly he is plunged into darkness. **“The six organs and his head and feet will be enveloped in total darkness. If the person traces the shape of external things with his hands, then even though he cannot see, he will recognize someone’s head and feet if he feels them.”** If this worldly person who has his eyes closed and can’t see anything should pass his hand over the body of someone near him, he will know the person’s head as a head when he runs his hands over it, and when he follows the shape of the person’s feet, he will realize they are feet. **“This knowledge and awareness are the same way.”** Awareness and knowing still function. When your six organs have been is extinguished, the capacity to know and be aware is not in the least depleted. The illustration here confirms that even with your eyes closed, your awareness and knowing do not disappear. They remain the same.

Sutra:

“If light is the condition requisite for seeing, then darkness brings the absence of seeing. But to perceive without light means that no dark manifestation can obscure the seeing.

Commentary:

“If light is the condition requisite for seeing – if the reason we see is because of light**-then darkness brings the absence of seeing.** When it gets dark, you cannot see. **But to perceive without light means that no dark manifestation can obscure the seeing.”** If you don’t need to rely on external light, but put forth light from your self-nature, then there is no kind of darkness that can obscure your seeing. It can’t obstruct you and prevent you from seeing. If you are genuinely enlightened, if you have been certified as having obtained the fruit of Arhatship, then day and night are the same.

Light and darkness are the same. You can see equally well in either. An ordinary person cannot see in a dark room, but an Arhat can. So it is said:

> *Enlightenment is like a lamp in the night,*
> *or a sudden light in a windowless room.*

However, that is just an analogy. Don't get attached to it being exactly like that. What is expressed in words is not necessarily true. That which cannot be expressed is truth. What we are talking about here is just a certain state. You may see the room as dark, while someone else may perceive light in it. This is due to the differences in people's karmic responses. If you are enlightened, then night is the same as day; sleeping and dreams are the same as your waking state. You won't even be confused or upside down in your dreams. In fact, when you are enlightened you very rarely dream at all.

Why is it necessary to cultivate? Because you don't have control of yourself. Perhaps you are in control and clear-headed when you are awake, but you lose control when you get confused. When you are healthy you are in control, but when you get sick you lose control. You are ineffectual. Perhaps you can remain in control when you are sick and not get confused or do upside-down things, but you are still not in control when you are asleep. You may say you can remain in control when you are asleep, but when you have dreams you lose control. You become upside-down. If you can remain in control when you are dreaming, you may lose control when you are about to die. At that time the four elements separate, and though you might like to say, "I'd rather not die right now," no politeness is extended to you. You're certainly not going to get out of it.

We people cultivate the Way in order to be able to remain in control when we are healthy, when we are awake and clear-headed, when we are sick, when we are asleep, when we are dreaming, even more when we die. We want to be such that we can die if we want to, and such that if we don't want to die, we can go on living without it being any problem. We want to be free of those restric-

tions. Then we can be said to be free of birth and death. If we want to live, we can; and if we want to die, we can do that, too. For instance, if you want to live, you can live for several thousand years, like Patriarch Mahakashyapa. If you want to die, you can do so standing up, sitting down, or lying down. You can do it any way you want.

Sutra:

"Once the organs and objects are eradicated, how can the enlightened brightness not become perfect and wonderful?"

Commentary:

"Ananda, **once the organs and objects are eradicated,** once the six sense-organs and six sense-objects are done away with, then 'no dark manifestation can obscure the seeing.'" When the darkness obscures them, the organs cannot exhibit their strength and function. **"How can the enlightened brightness not become perfect and wonderful?"** How can you say that the fundamental enlightened brightness will not become perfect and wonderful? How can you say that it will not return to the source and become perfect and wonderful once again?

CHAPTER 5

Hearing is Not Sound

I2 Investigation and understanding of the explanation of the two doubts.
J1 Investigation of the explanation of the doubt that the basic nature is severed and extinguished.
K1 Ananda's mistaken understanding of the Buddha's words causes him to ask a misguided question.
L1 He sees cause and fruition as opposites.

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, as the Buddha has said, 'The resolve for enlightenment on the cause-ground which seeks the eternal must be in mutual accord with the ground of fruition.'

Commentary:

Ananda has once again given rise to doubts, and so he comes up with another question. **Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, as the Buddha has said,** according to the doctrines you discussed in the past, **'The resolve for enlightenment on the cause-ground which seeks the eternal' –** on the cause-ground you bring forth the true resolve for enlightenment, which you hope will remain forever and never be destroyed-It **'must be in mutual accord with the ground of fruition.'** It must not be in opposition with the principles of fruition.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, the ground of fruition is Bodhi; Nirvana; true suchness; the Buddha-nature; the Amala-Consciousness; the Empty Treasury of the Thus Come One; the great, Perfect Mirror-Wisdom. But although it is called by these seven names, it is pure and perfect, its substance is durable, like royal vajra, everlasting and indestructible.

Commentary:

"World Honored One, the ground of fruition is Bodhi; Nirvana; true suchness; the Buddha-nature; the Amala-Consciousness; the Empty Treasury of the Thus Come One; the great, Perfect Mirror-Wisdom." "Bodhi" is "the Way of Enlightenment" (覺道). "Nirvana" is said to be "neither produced nor destroyed (不生不滅)." "True Suchness" is actual and not false; a single, non-dual suchness. Suchness is not a "thing" at all. It is like emptiness. True Suchness is just true emptiness. In one truth is all truth. But if there is the slightest lack of truth, it cannot be called True Suchness.

The Buddha-nature is inherent in all beings. The Amala-Consciousness is the "consciousness devoid of filth (無垢識)." Prior to enlightenment, this consciousness is called the eighth consciousness, the Alaya-Consciousness. Alaya means "storehouse" (藏識); the name indicates that it contains everything within it. The amala is the transformation of the eighth consciousness into a pure consciousness.

The "Empty Treasury of the Thus Come One" is another name, and the "Great, Perfect Mirror-Wisdom" is also a name. **"But although it is called by these seven names,** although the ground of fruition has different titles, **it is pure and perfect.** In its principle, in its noumenal aspect, it is pure and perfect. **Its substance is durable**: its essence is durable, **like royal vajra, everlasting and indestructible.** It will never be destroyed."

Sutra:

"If the seeing and hearing are apart from light and darkness, movement and stillness, and penetration and obstruction and are ultimately devoid of substance, they are then like thoughts apart from sense-objects: they do not exist at all.

Commentary:

"If the seeing and hearing are apart from light and darkness, movement and stillness, and penetration and obstruction and are ultimately devoid of substance, then their essence ceases to be. **They are then like thoughts apart from sense-objects: they do not exist at all.** The thoughts of the mind don't have substance, either. When separated from the defiling objects which correspond to them, they are entirely non-existent.

Sutra:

"How can what is ultimately destroyed be a cause by which one cultivates in the hope of obtaining the fruition of the Thus Come One's sevenfold permanent abode?

Commentary:

The mind-organ is "devoid of a substance when separated from its defiling objects." **"How can what is ultimately destroyed be a cause by which one cultivates in the hope of obtaining the fruition of the Thus Come One's sevenfold permanent abode?"** How can it be used in cultivation to obtain the Thus Come One's sevenfold, everlasting fruition of Bodhi, Nirvana, True Suchness, the Buddha-nature, the Amala-consciousness, the Empty Treasury of the Thus Come One and the Great, Perfect Mirror-Wisdom?"

L2 Earlier and later explanations differ.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, when it is apart from light and darkness, the seeing is ultimately empty, just as when there is no sense-object, the essence of thought is extinguished.

Commentary:

“World Honored One, when it is apart from light and darkness – if it were to be separated from light and dark **– the seeing is ultimately empty, just as when there is no sense-object, the essence of thought is extinguished.** Thoughts cannot arise.”

Sutra:

“I go back and forth in circles, minutely searching, and basically there is no such thing as my mind or its objects. Just what should be used to seek the Unsurpassed Enlightenment?

Commentary:

“I go back and forth, researching and investigating, **in circles.** I go through the process again and again, **and basically there is no such thing as my mind or its objects.** My mind doesn’t exist. None of it exists. **Just what should be used to seek the Unsurpassed Enlightenment,** to accomplish the enlightenment on the ground of fruition? I search everywhere, and there isn’t any mind. I can’t use the mind subject to production and extinction. And I can’t find the true mind. So, how do I set up a mind on the cause-ground to seek the enlightenment on the ground of fruition?

Sutra:

“The Thus Come One previously said it was a tranquil essence, perfect and eternal. His present contradiction defies belief and is a resort to idle theorizing. How can the Thus Come One’s words be true and actual?

Commentary:

The Thus Come One previously said it was a tranquil essence, perfect and eternal. He discussed the tranquil, perfect, eternal essence of seeing. **His present contradiction defies belief and is a resort to idle theorizing.** But the Dharma the Buddha speaks is not idle theory. Yet, **how can the Thus Come One’s words be true and actual?** The doctrine the Buddha has explained contradicts itself. First the Buddha said, ‘Don’t use the mind subject to production and extinction,’ and later he said it is just that

mind which you use in cultivation. I, Ananda, cannot find the mind in question, and the more I hear, the less I understand. How can the Buddha still be speaking the truth? The Buddha should be speaking the truth: true words, actual words, not false words. Why is it that what the Buddha says contradicts itself?

L3 He again seeks instruction.

Sutra:

“I only hope the Buddha will let fall his great compassion and will instruct us who do not understand and who are holding on tightly.”

Commentary:

“Now **I only hope** the World Honored One, **the Buddha will let fall his great compassion and will instruct us who do not understand and who are holding on tightly.** We are grasping tightly to the dharmas of the Small Vehicle and are afraid to let go.”

K2 The Tathagata uses an immediate incident to investigate permanence.
L1 He promises to resolve his doubts.

Sutra:

The Buddha told Ananda, “You study and learn much, but you have not yet extinguished outflows. In your mind you know only the causes of being upside down. But when the true inversion manifests, you really cannot recognize it yet.

Commentary:

After hearing what Ananda has just said, the Buddha doesn’t know whether to laugh or cry. **The Buddha told Ananda, “You study and learn much,** you are erudite and have a strong memory, **but you have not yet extinguished outflows.** You still haven’t obtained the extinction of outflows. **In your mind you know only the causes of being upside down. But when the true inversion manifests, you really cannot recognize it yet.** Just as it was said above, you know only how to write prescriptions. If the medicine were before you, you would not recognize it. So I say now that you

are well versed in the reasons for being upside down, but when you confront a genuinely upside-down situation, you don't recognize it. You don't know what is upside down.

Sutra:

"Lest your sincerity and faith remain insufficient, I will try to make use of an ordinary happening to dispel your doubts."

Commentary:

"Lest your sincerity and faith remain insufficient… I'm afraid you are not sincere enough, and so if I told you outright, you wouldn't believe me. You don't have enough faith. You're not sufficiently humble. **I will try to make use of an ordinary happening to dispel your doubts.** I'll try using a common situation to explain this principle for you. I'll get rid of your doubts this way."

L2 He strikes a bell to investigate permanence.
M1 Two questions and answers.

Sutra:

Then the Thus Come One instructed Rahula to strike the bell once, and he asked Ananda, "Did you hear that?"

Ananda and the members of the Great Assembly all said, "We heard it."

Commentary:

It has already been said that the nature of hearing is neither produced nor extinguished, but Ananda has misunderstood the principle the Buddha has been explaining and given rise to more doubts. So now the Buddha investigates the nature of hearing with the sound of the bell that has been struck. **Then the Thus Come One instructed Rahula to strike the bell once** Rahula is the Buddha's only son. His name means "obstacle" (覆障), because he remained in his mother's womb for six years before he was born. This is not terribly unusual. In China there are many such cases. One famous case was that of Lao Lai Tzu, who had white hair and

eye brows and could talk from the moment of birth. He was born old, but he, nevertheless, still acted like a child and was rambunctious. There was also Lao Tzu, of course, who is said to have stayed in his mother's womb for eighty-one years. His surname was Li and he was nicknamed Lao Tzu or Lao Tan. Compared to these two strange incidents, Rahula's dwelling in his mother's womb for six years is not so spectacular. Since he was the Buddha's son, Rahula was very obedient, so the Buddha said, "Go ring the bell." Then **he asked Ananda, "Did you hear that?"**

Ananda and the members of the Great Assembly all said, "We heard it."

Sutra:

The bell ceased to sound, and the Buddha again asked, "Do you hear it now?"

Ananda and the members of the Great Assembly all said, "We do not hear it."

Commentary:

The bell ceased to sound. The sound of the bell faded away. There was no sound. **The Buddha again asked, "Do you hear it now?"** The Buddha asked Ananda, "Well, do you hear it not, or don't you?"

Ananda and the members of the Great Assembly all said, "We do not hear it. We don't hear it at all now."

Sutra:

Then Rahula struck the bell once again. The Buddha again asked, "Do you hear it now?"

Ananda and the Great Assembly again said, "We hear it."

Commentary:

Once the sound of the bell had ceased and the Buddha had asked his question, Rahula figured out what to do next; he was very intelligent. Rahula was foremost in secret practices. People never realized that he was cultivating. No one knew that every day he was

developing his skill. What did he do? He could enter samadhi at any time, in any place. When he went to the bathroom, he could enter samadhi. When it was time to eat, he would eat, but he was also in samadhi. His mind was not on the food. But no one ever caught on, and so he was said to be foremost in secret practices. Let's take reciting the Shurangama Mantra as an example. No one saw him recite the Mantra, and yet he could do it by heart. No one ever noticed him studying it or practicing it, but he could recite from memory. Since Rahula was foremost in secret practices, he was very intelligent and perceptive of he Buddha's intent, and so after the sound of the bell had ceased for a time, **Rahula struck the bell once again. The Buddha again asked** Ananda**, "Do you hear it now?"** Well, do you hear it now?" the Buddha pressed Ananda.

Ananda and the Great Assembly again said, "We hear it." "We hear it." they exclaimed. "The bell just rang."

This situation – the bell being rung and their then being asked if they had heard it – is the ordinary happening the Buddha mentioned. Wouldn't you say that anyone could understand this process of striking the bell and then asking if it was heard? Since Ananda had failed to understand the doctrines explained earlier, the Buddha now uses this very simple example to illustrate them.

Sutra:

The Buddha asked Ananda, "What do you hear and what do you not hear?"

Ananda and the members of the Great Assembly all said to the Buddha, "When the bell is rung, we hear it. Once the sound of the bell ceases, so that even its echo fades away, we do not hear it."

Commentary:

The Buddha asked Ananda, "What do you hear and what do you not hear? I want to hear what you have to say.**"**

Ananda and the members of the Great Assembly all said to the Buddha, "When the bell is rung, we hear it." When the bell

is struck, we all hear the bell's sound. **Once the sound of the bell ceases –** a while after the bell is struck its sound disappears **so that even its echo fades away.** Both the sound and the echo are gone. Then, **we do not hear it.** That's what we mean by 'not hearing.' So the problem that Ananda and the Great Assembly are having is to be found in their "not hearing." They think that when there is no sound there is no hearing. Actually, though, when there is no sound, what perceives that there is no hearing? That which knows there is no hearing is hearing itself. If you were really without hearing, then you basically would not know whether you were hearing or not. That's the important point.

Sutra:

The Thus Come One again instructed Rahula to strike the bell, and he asked Ananda, "Is there sound now?"

Ananda and the members of the Great Assembly all said, "There is a sound."

Commentary:

The Buddha, **The Thus Come One again instructed Rahula to strike the bell, and he asked Ananda, "Is there sound now?"**

Ananda and the members of the Great Assembly all said, "There is a sound."

Sutra:

After a short time the sound ceased, and the Buddha again asked, "Is there a sound now?"

Ananda and the Great Assembly answered, "There is no sound."

Commentary:

After a short time, after just a bit, **the sound ceased,** the bell stopped ringing, **and the Buddha again asked** Ananda, **"Is there a sound now?"** Do you still hear a sound, or don't you?"

Ananda and the Great Assembly answered, "There is no sound."

Sutra:

After a moment, Rahula again struck the bell, and the Buddha again asked, "Is there sound now?"

Ananda and the Great Assembly said together, "There is sound."

Commentary:

After a moment, that is, in a little while, **Rahula again struck the bell, and the Buddha again asked, "Is there sound now?"** What about it, is there any sound, or isn't there?"

Ananda and the Great Assembly said together, "There is sound."

Sutra:

The Buddha asked Ananda, "What is meant by 'sound,' and what is meant by 'no sound?'"

Ananda and the Great Assembly told the Buddha, "When the bell is struck there is sound. Once the sound ceases and even the echo fades away, there is said to be no sound."

Commentary:

The Buddha asked Ananda, "What is meant by 'sound?' Explain to me the difference between there being a sound and there not being any sound." **Ananda and the Great Assembly told the Buddha, "When the bell is struck there is sound.** That's what we mean by sound. **Once the sound ceases and even the echo fades away –** after the bell has been struck then the sound dies away – **there is said to be no sound."**

M2 He scolds them for their confusion.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda and the Great Assembly, "Why are you inconsistent in what you say?"

The Great Assembly and Ananda then asked the Buddha, "In what way have we been inconsistent?"

The Buddha said, "When I asked you if it was your hearing, you said it was your hearing. Then, when I asked you if it was sound, you said it was sound. I cannot ascertain from your answers if it is hearing or if it is sound. How can you not say this is inconsistent?

Commentary:

The Buddha said to Ananda and the Great Assembly, "Why are you inconsistent in what you say? Why do you contradict yourselves? What you say isn't even reasonable.**"**

The Great Assembly and Ananda then asked the Buddha, "In what way have we been inconsistent? How are we being unreasonable in what we say?**"**

The Buddha said, "When I asked you if it was your hearing, you said it was your hearing. Then, when I asked you if it was sound, you said it was sound. I said, 'Do you hear, or not?' and you said, 'I hear.' Then I asked, 'Is there sound, or not?' and you said, 'There is sound.' **I cannot ascertain from your answers if it is hearing or if it is sound.** You say it is both hearing and sound, which one is it ultimately? Your answers don't specify. **How can you not say this is inconsistent?"**

M3 His refutation reveals the proper meaning.

Sutra:

"Ananda, when the sound is gone without an echo, you say there is no hearing. If there were really no hearing, the hearing-nature would be extinguished. It would be just like dead wood. If then the bell were sounded again, how would you know?

Commentary:

"Ananda," the Buddha says, "You are not distinguishing clearly between sound and hearing, and this is the point which you do not understand; this is the place where you are really upside down. Why can't you even tell the difference between hearing and sound? **Ananda, when the sound is gone without an echo, you say there**

is no hearing. If there were really no hearing, the hearing-nature would be extinguished. It would be the end of the hearing-nature. There should be no longer any capacity for hearing. And yet when there is another sound, the hearing is still there; it isn't gone after all. If there really were no hearing-nature, **it would be just like dead wood. If then the bell were sounded again, how would you know?"**

This is the important point. Although the sound ceases, the hearing-nature has not been cut off. It is still in operation, because the hearing-nature is not subject to production or extinction. The sound is subject to production and extinction, but the nature of hearing is not. There is hearing whether or not there is sound. So when the sound ceased and he answered that there was no hearing, it was a mistake. That's the place where he misunderstood. That's where he is upside down.

Sutra:

"What you know to be there or not there is the defiling object of sound. But could the hearing nature be there or not be there depending on your perception of its being there or not? If the hearing could really not be there, what would perceive that it was not?

Commentary:

"What you know to be there or not there is the defiling object of sound. Of course, what you notice being there or not being there belongs to sound. **But could the hearing nature be there or not be there?** Is that the way the hearing-nature is? Is it that it exists when there is sound and doesn't exist when there is no sound? When there is sound, there is hearing; when there is no sound, there is still hearing. The nature of hearing is neither produced nor extinguished. Sound is subject to production and extinction; when there is a certain vibration, there is sound, and when that vibration ceases, there is no sound. But the hearing-nature does not appear and disappear **depending on your perception of its being there or not.** The hearing nature doesn't

take its cues from you. **If the hearing could really not be there –** if you say that the hearing-nature really can cease to exist in the absence of sound **– what would perceive that it was not?** What would know of its absence? What would perceive that there was no hearing? That which knows the absence of hearing is your hearing-nature. You say that you know that you are not hearing, but if you really didn't have a hearing-nature at that point, you wouldn't even realize that you were not hearing.

Sutra:

"And so, Ananda, the sounds that you hear are what are subject to production and extinction, not your hearing. The arising and cessation of sounds cause your hearing-nature to be as if there or not there.

Commentary:

"And so, because of this, **Ananda, the sounds that you hear are what are subject to production and extinction.** The sounds you hear arise and cease. **The arising and cessation of sounds cause your hearing-nature to be as if there or not there.** When the sounds come forth and die away, it is not your hearing that is there or not there. That's not what happens. Whether there is sound or not, the hearing nature remains throughout.

M4 He upbraids him for his confusion and tells him to stop making the same mistake.

Sutra:

"You are so upside-down that you mistake sound for hearing. No wonder you are so confused that you take what is everlasting for what is annihilated. Ultimately, you cannot say that there is no hearing nature apart from movement and stillness and from obstruction and penetration.

Commentary:

"You are so upside-down that you mistake sound for hearing. Ananda, you don't even recognize where you yourself are upside down. That's why I say that you don't even recognize the

difference between right side up and upside down. You think that sound is hearing and that hearing is sound. How can this be? Sound and hearing are different. **No wonder you are so confused that you take what is everlasting for what is annihilated.** It's not surprising that you're so mixed up. No wonder you don't understand. You think that the true, permanent, undying nature is subject to annihilation. When did I ever tell you that the tranquil, true mind will cease to be? It is fundamentally an eternally abiding principle, and you say that it will come to an end, that it will disappear. You're really awfully confused. How do I know that? You can't even tell the difference between sound and hearing. It's such a simple matter, but you say that it is both sound and hearing that arises and ceases to be. In the end, which is it? Why are you so muddled? **Ultimately, you cannot say that there is no hearing nature apart from movement and stillness and from obstruction and penetration.** You should never say that apart from these conditions the nature of hearing does not exist. How could it not exist? The hearing-nature abides forever.

L3 He invents a dream to investigate impermanence.
M1 He shows that in the dream he is not oblivious.

Sutra:

"Consider a person who falls into a deep sleep while napping on his bed. While he is asleep, someone in his household starts beating clothes or pounding rice. In his dream, the person hears the sound of beating and pounding and takes it for something else, perhaps for the striking of a drum or the ringing of a bell. In the dream he wonders why the bell sounds like stone or wood.

Commentary:

Above, sound was discussed in order to understand the nature of hearing. In talking about the sound of the bell we came to know that the hearing-nature is neither produced nor extinguished. If the hearing-nature were extinguished, there would be no further hearing. But, when the bell is struck, the nature of hearing is neither

produced nor extinguished. Regardless of whether there is sound, the hearing-nature abides forever. Now the Buddha makes use of another ordinary happening to illustrate that the nature of hearing is neither produced nor extinguished.

“Consider a person who falls into a deep sleep while napping on his bed. He is so sound asleep that he does not wake up when someone calls him. But, even though he does not awaken, his hearing-nature is still present. He perceives sounds, if mistakenly, even though he is asleep. “The mistake is not made by the hearing-nature; it is the sixth-mind consciousness, the “solitary consciousness,” which makes the mistaken perception.

This person, then, is in such a deep sleep that he is unaware of everything. **“While he is asleep, someone in his household starts beating clothes or pounding rice.”** “Beating clothes” refers to the method of washing clothes used of old. I remember seeing this done when I was a child. There was a flat stone and two beating-sticks made of wood. They would lay the clothes on the stone and beat them clean with the sticks in a rhythmic fashion.

“Pounding rice.” Remember that the Great Master, the Sixth Patriarch, pounded rice for eight months. One uses a pestle and also stamps on the coarse grains with one’s feet in order to separate the chaff from the kernels. These methods were used in ancient China and obviously they were familiar to the Indian way of life as well. So, the Buddha gave these two examples.

“In his dream, the person hears the sound of beating and pounding and takes it for something else.” “That per Son” refers to the one who is asleep. He hears the sounds of the clothes being beaten and the rice being pounded, but in his dreams he misinterprets them as something else. What does he think they are? He mistakes them **“perhaps for the striking of a drum or the ringing of a bell. In the dream he wonders why the bell sounds like stone or wood.”** “How come that bell sounds like a piece of wood or stone?” he thinks. In the dream-state, the sixth mind-consciousness, the “solitary consciousness,” misinterprets the sound.

Dreams are the tricks played by the sixth mind-consciousness. It takes control of you and causes you to dream certain things. Why did this person take the sound he heard to be the striking of a drum or the ringing of a bell when, in fact, it was neither of these sounds? It came from a mistaken impression on his part during his dream. And that's why he wonders why the sound is more like wood or stone being struck than like a bell. He finds it strange.

Dreams happen when the sixth mind-consciousness goes awry. Whatever happens to you during the day, or whatever experiences you encounter, will affect the dreams you have at night. Some people who cultivate the Way, cultivate the mind-consciousness until they can "go out esoterically and enter mysteriously (出玄入牝). To "go out esoterically" means to send a being out of the crown of one's head. This being can then leave the body and go elsewhere. But this experience is not genuine, because the being is a "yin spirit." Since, when it gets out, it has a certain amount of awareness, it is called a spirit.

Once there was an old Taoist who really was skilled in his practice, but he had a big temper. Whenever anything came up, he'd get angry about it. Since he got angry all the time, he was indulging in hatred. He considered himself to be well-skilled, however – to be pretty remarkable, in fact. He boasted that as soon as he went to sleep, he could send out this spirit. It was like a dream-state, but he had an awareness of it and could remember it clearly afterward.

One day, the old Taoist encountered a Buddhist monk, and they discussed their methods of cultivation. The Taoist said, "In Taoism, we can cultivate and become immortal. What talent do you Buddhists have? Shakyamuni Buddha died just the same. But no one knows where the Patriarch of Taoism, Lee Lao Chun, went. He died, so they say, but really he went to the heavens. So the skill we develop in Taoism is to 'go out esoterically and enter mysteriously.'"

"How do you go out esoterically? asked the monk.

"When I lie down and go to sleep, I can go anywhere I please," the Taoist replied.

"Oh? Fine. Go to sleep now and send out a spirit while I watch." said the monk.

The old Taoist laid down and went to sleep, and as soon as he dozed off, he let out a spirit. But what kind? It was a snake that crawled out of the top of his head! The snake slithered off the side of the bed onto the floor and crawled outside to the edge of the cesspool. It drank some of the dirty water and then crept along the edge of the water. The monk picked a blade of grass and set it in the path and then pulled up a clump of sod and set it beside the blade. When the snake saw the blade of grass, it fled in fright and scurried back where it had come from. Having reentered the crown of the Taoist's head, the old cultivator awoke in a sweat, scared to death.

"Where did you go," asked the monk, "when you went out the top of your head?"

The Taoist replied, "I went to the heavens to a heavenly pool." He had mistaken the cesspool for a heavenly pool. "When I got to the heavenly pool, I drank some sweet dew water, and then, as I strolled around, I saw a spirit in golden armor standing in the path wielding a sword. He was intent upon killing me, so I rushed back."

The monk said, "Oh, so that's what happened, according to you; you went to the heavens." And then he informed him that his perception of the incident was totally different from the Taoist's, and he related what he'd seen. "The reason a snake came out of your head is probably because you have such a big temper and are always getting angry. If you don't change your fiery nature, you're likely to become a snake. Snakes have poison in their hearts, and your hatred is just like a poison in you right now."

The monk continued, "You went outside and drank a lot of liquid from a cesspool filled with urine and excrement. That is your heavenly pool with sweet dew water! And when I put a blade of grass and a lump of sod in your path, you thought it was an armored

spirit out to get you. That's when you hurried back and reentered your head. That's what I saw."

The old Taoist thought: "Then everything I have cultivated is totally wrong!" So he bowed to the monk as his teacher and followed him to cultivate the Buddhadharma. He gave up indulging in his former skills. So, if people tell you they can leave their body during their dreams, it is a yin spirit they are referring to. This yin spirit will mirror your own disposition; if you are a compassionate person it will be a compassionate spirit; if you are an angry Person, or a greedy person, it will be like that. That's why it's said of people,

With a single thought of hatred,
Eighty thousand obstacles arise.

The old Taoist had such a temper that he could transform into a snake. Thank goodness he met a monk who saved him and kept him from having to become a snake in some other life.

Sutra:

"Suddenly he awakens and immediately recognizes the sound of pounding. He tells the members of his household, 'I was just having a dream in which I mistook the sound of pounding for the sound of a drum.'

Commentary:

"Suddenly the person in the deep sleep who is dreaming **awakens.** He comes out of his sound sleep, probably because the sound of the rice being pounded is so loud, and because the sound of the cloth being beaten is also noisy. He comes out of his dream **and immediately recognizes the sound of pounding.** Very quickly he recognizes the sound of rice being pounded and knows it is not a bell being rung."

There are many methods used to pound rice. Sometimes it is done with water power, sometimes with man power. In the past I manned the pestle at Tse Hsing Monastery at Ta Yu Mountain. But

usually I would pound only for a little while before someone came along to relieve me. At Ta Chiao Monastery in Yunmen, established by the Elder Master Hsu Yun, the rice was pounded by water power, which was very convenient.

When this person wakes up he knows that the sound he's heard is the sound of pounding rice. **"He tells the members of his household, 'I was just having a dream in which I mistook the sound of pounding for the sound of a drum.'** When I was asleep, I was dreaming, and my perceptions went awry. I though the sound of the rice being pounded was actually a drum being beaten." The text above mentions the sound of a bell as well as the sound of a drum, but the principle is the same. The drum can represent the bell, and vice verse. It's not important. In lecturing sutras you have to be flexible when explaining the text. Don't be too exacting. In lecturing, you want to explain the principle. If you make the principle clear, slight variations in the text are of no great importance.

M2 He confirms that the nature is everlasting.

Sutra:

"Ananda, how can this person in the dream-state remember stillness and motion, opening and closing, and penetrability and obstruction? Yet, although he is physically asleep, his hearing-nature is not drowsy.

Commentary:

"Ananda, do you understand now, or don't you? **How can this person in the dream-state** – I don't know who the person in the dream-state is; is it me, is it you, or is it someone else? How can he **remember stillness and motion?"** How can he remember stillness and movement, though he's in his dream? Wow does he still recollect **opening and closing, and penetrability and obstruction?** He doesn't-have this kind of discriminating mind in his dream-state. He doesn't make distinctions between stillness and movement or between what is open and penetrable and what is

closed and obstructed. **Yet, although he is physically asleep –** his body is sleeping **– his hearing-nature is not drowsy.** His hearing-nature isn't dozing; it has not be severed from him. Even in sleep, his hearing-nature remains. If it's still there, then, why did he mistake the sound of beating clothes and pounding rice for a drum being played or a bell being rung? In his waking state he is familiar with the sounds of a drum and bell, and So in sleep these sounds manifest in his eighth consciousness and lead him to believe he is hearing a drum or bell. He makes a mistake in perception.

All the upside-down things that people involve themselves in are like the mistaken interpretations of sounds in a dream. The mistake brings about upside-down thinking, just like the old Taoist's. He thought he was going to the heavens and drinking sweet dew when, in fact, he was drinking urine from a cesspool. If he'd realized the truth, he'd have vomited for sure. But at the time he didn't know what he was doing. He was like a dog eating excrement: he took the whole thing for granted and even though he was really in a good place. He felt like he was being treated to something special, all because he failed to recognize what was really happening.

Sutra:

"Even when your body is gone and your light and life move on, how could this nature leave you?

Commentary:

The above section of text explains that your hearing nature does not sleep even when your body is asleep. Even in dreams, the hearing-nature is not cut off. It is eternal. Not only is it not severed in the dream-state, it is not cut off at death, either. Thus, the text now says, **"Even when your body is gone –** when you die and your body is gone **– and your light and life move on"**: When your life is cut off, it's not that it's actually cut off, rather, when a person dies, his life moves on. It's just like a person who lives in a hotel; he will move to a new hotel when the old one gets too run-down. So when you've cast off this shell, when you have finished with this

body, you will move somewhere else. **How could this nature,** the hearing-nature, **leave you?** How could it disappear when your physical form disappears? Even at death, this nature is not cut off."

L4 He reveals the confusion and teaches him to be on guard.
M1 He reveals how perpetual confusion causes one to fall into a state of impermanence.

Sutra:

"But because living beings, from time without beginning, have pursued forms and sounds and have followed their thoughts as they turn and flow, they still are not enlightened to the purity, wonder, and permanence of their nature.

Commentary:

When you reach the end of your physical existence, when your body decays and dies, your light and life move on; but your nature, your hearing-nature, is indestructible. **"But because living beings, from time without beginning, have pursued forms and sounds"**: Why don't living beings become Buddhas? Why don't they come to understand the Way? It is because they have pursued forms and sounds from limitless, limitless kalpas past right down to the present. They chase the defiling objects of forms and sounds and get involved with them. They "**have followed their thoughts as they turn and flow,** over and over, and **they still are not enlightened.** They mistake the false for the true and are turned around by this mundane dust. They are so involved with what is false that they fail to recognize what is true, and so now they are still not enlightened **to the purity, wonder, and permanence of their nature.** They don't understand this doctrine, which is subtle, wonderful, and truly permanent."

Sutra:

"They do not accord with what is eternal, but chase after things which are subject to production and extinction. Because of this they are born again and again and become mixed with defilement as they flow and turn.

Commentary:

"They do not accord with what is eternal. They do not pursue the principle of the wonder and permanence of their own nature; what is more, they go counter to this principle, and they **chase after things which are subject to production and extinction.** Is there anything in this world which is not subject to production and extinction? Everything with form and appearance is a dharma of production and extinction. The dharma of non-production and non-extinction has no form or appearance. But most people become attached to things with form and appearance and forget about the principle of wonderful permanence. **Because of this they are born again and again.** This life is followed by the next life, and the next life turns into the one after that. What happens life after life? Beings have to **become mixed with defilement as they flow and turn."** The word "mixed" implies that one does not maintain purity but is stained by defilement, which further pollutes the mixture. What does one get mixed up with? With the turning and flowing. And what is meant by turning and flowing?

In this life one is named Smith, and in the next life one is called Jones. In the following lifetime one is called cow, in the one after that one is named horse, and in the one that follows, one is called a pig. You shouldn't think that things are always going to be like they are right now. The old pig was the former Old Man Jones. The Elder Jones is just the present old cow. One person just keeps turning around and around; it is the same nature with a different body. And because that's the way it goes, you fail to understand. You don't recognize what's going on. Although you don't recognize what's going on, I do. I recognize that you are Old Cow, Old Horse, and Old Pig. When you act like a horse, you turn into a horse; when you act like a pig, you turn into a pig; when you act like a dog, you become a dog; when you act like a cow, you turn into a cow. And if a pig is capable of human behavior – if it does something meritorious – it can become a person. One turns and flows in the paths of rebirth. Sometimes one is born in the heavens, but once the heavenly blessings are used up one falls into the hells

again. When the sufferings of the hells have been endured, one gets born in the human realm, or becomes an animal. If a person is very uncouth and has no understanding of human behavior, there's no need to wonder about it. In his last life he was certainly an animal. If he hadn't been an animal in his last life, he wouldn't be so rude in this life. But, even though you understand that he was an animal before, you should not slight him by saying something like, "You! Last life you were a pig for sure." Or, "You must have been a cow before." Even if he was a pig or a cow, all living beings have the Buddha-nature and all can become Buddhas. He may be stupid now and not know that he should cultivate; but if on the other hand he were to become vigorous, he might become a Buddha before you do. There's nothing fixed about it. Even if he is an animal, you should not look down on him. In a former life, the Buddha was Never Slighting Bodhisattva, who always said, "I don't dare slight any of you. In the future, you will all become Buddhas." "All" includes all living beings. People who have not obtained the Buddha Eye and the Wisdom Eye should not slight living beings. People who have obtained the Buddha Eye should even less slight living beings! All living beings are your past fathers and mothers and are future Buddhas. How many parents have we had in the past, through life after life? It's not known how many there have been. Because of this, the Ullumbana Assembly, celebrated every year on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month, is an excellent opportunity to save a lot of people. In celebrating it, we set up memorial plaques so that our ancestors, the ghosts, can stay here and listen to the Sutras. After they've heard the Sutra, they can go to rebirth, and at the very least they will become influential people who in the future will protect and uphold the Buddhadharma.

M2 He teaches him to be on guard in order to once and for all accomplish right enlightenment.

Sutra:

"But if they reject production and extinction and uphold true permanence, an everlasting light will appear, and with

that, the sense-organs, defiling objects, and consciousnesses will disappear.

Commentary:

"But if they reject production and extinction – if, in cultivating the Way, you don't make use of your conscious mind that makes discriminations, and if you **uphold true permanence**: if you use your true and actual, wonderfully eternal mind, your true mind and eternal nature, then **an everlasting light will appear.** Eventually, you will produce a constant light – the light of your self-nature, **and with that, the sense-organs, defiling objects, and consciousnesses will disappear.** Your thoughts involving the six sense-organs, the six sense objects and the six consciousnesses will disappear at the same time.

Sutra:

"The appearance of thought becomes defilement; the emotions of the consciousness become filth. If you stay far away from these two, then your dharma eye will accordingly become pure and bright. How could you fail to accomplish unsurpassed knowledge and enlightenment?"

Commentary:

"The appearance of thought": "Appearance" refers to one of the two aspects of the eighth consciousness: the aspect of appearance, which means all external conditioned dharmas. "Thought" refers to your false thinking. False thinking and the aspect of appearance combine to form defilement – literally, "dust." **"The emotions of the consciousness become filth."** This refers to attachment to the second aspect of the eighth consciousness, the aspect of seeing, which means internal perceptions. In your discriminating mind-consciousness you produce emotions and with them comes defilement. The origin of filth is emotions.

What harms people most is their emotions. No matter what situation they encounter, they react with emotion. The problem of emotion causes people to be born in a swoon and die in a dream.

"If you stay far away from these two, the appearance of thought, which brings defilement, and the emotions of consciousness, which make filth – you want to separate from both aspects of the eighth consciousness, appearances and seeing – if you can be apart from thoughts and emotions, **then your dharma eye will accordingly become pure and bright."** The Dharma-Eye referred to here is not necessarily the Dharma Eye that is one of the Five Eyes and Six Spiritual Penetrations. It can be interpreted to figuratively mean the opening of your wisdom. It's even more wonderful if you actually open your Dharma-Eye, so that, throughout the ten directions and the three periods of time to the ends of empty space and the Dharma Realm, everything is a Dharma-Treasury. If your Dharma-Eye is clear and pure, you immediately stop being muddled. In your mind there is genuine wisdom. "**How could you fail to accomplish unsurpassed knowledge and enlightenment?** How could you not obtain unsurpassed wisdom and enlightenment? You will certainly obtain it. Just stay away from the dust of false thought and the defilement of emotion."

This is just a short passage of sutra text, but every one should pay particular attention to it. Don't get attached to emotion and love and become involved in discriminations and false thinking. You want to separate yourself from them. Did you hear? This is very important. Don't take it lightly. Don't fall asleep now. If you fall asleep and fail to study this sutra, you've truly missed an opportunity. Everyone should write this passage in his or her mind and never forget it.

The appearance of thought becomes defilement; the emotions of the consciousness become filth. If you stay far away from these two, then your Dharma Eye will accordingly become pure and bright. How could you fail to accomplish unsurpassed knowledge and enlightenment?

Not only should you memorize the Shurangama Mantra, you should memorize the sutra text as well. Every day your responsibil-

ities become greater. I’m not here just to play with you; I’m not just joking with you. You can’t be the least bit sloppy.

CHAPTER 6

The Source of the Knot

J2 He certifies to an understanding of the explanation of the doubt that there is another source for the knot.
K1 Ananda specifically asks about the source of the knot.
L1 He uses an analogy to discuss the origin.

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, the Thus Come One has explained the two meanings, yet, as I now contemplate people in the world, I believe that if they try to untie a knot and cannot find its center, they will never get the knot undone.

Commentary:

Having listened to all the principles explained above, Ananda has another doubt, so he constructs arguments where there is no room for argument. **Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, the Thus Come One has explained the two meanings."** This refers to two kinds of decisive meanings, one which makes use of the mind subject to production and extinction to cultivate and one which does not make use of the mind subject to production and extinction in cultivating. **Yet, as I now contemplate people in the world, I believe that if they try to untie a knot and cannot find its center –** if they don't know where

the center of the knot is – **they will never get the knot undone.** Since they can't even locate the center of the knot, how can they untie it?"

L2 He compares the analogy to the people in the assembly.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, I and all the other Sound Hearers in the Great Assembly who are not beyond study are the same way. From time without beginning we have been accompanied in birth and death by ignorance. We have obtained these good roots of erudition and are said to have left the home life, yet in fact we act like someone with a recurrent fever.

Commentary:

Ananda is very frank. He has the natural happiness and innocence of a child; he's very naive. **"World Honored One, I and all the other Sound Hearers in the Great Assembly who are not beyond study are the same way."** The first three stages of Arhatship are "not beyond study." When one reaches the fourth fruition, one is beyond study. "We Sound-Hearers are like the person trying to untie a knot; we don't know where the center of the knot is. At what place do we untie the knot? You have said that we can make use of the six sense-organs, but which sense-organ do we actually start with? Which organ is the very last to be released? Right now we have no idea.

"From time without beginning we have been accompanied in birth and death by ignorance. From beginningless kalpas until today we have been born and have died, doing one thing in this life and something else in the next life." In this life you believe in Buddhism, but in the next life you don't. Or in this life you don't believe in Buddhism, and in the next life you do. Or perhaps you believe in Buddhism, but you don't really understand it very well. You vacillate and only dabble in it.

In this way we become inseparable from ignorance. It's said that one is closest to one's parents or one's spouse, but that's not so.

What we are closest to is ignorance. Ignorance is to you as a shadow is to your body; it follows you wherever you go. It never leaves you for an instant. That's being even more intimate than newlyweds.

Ignorance accompanies you in birth and death. this is further evidence of how eternally inseparable it is from you. It's not the case that when the husband dies, the wife accompanies him in death. In exceptional cases this may perhaps occur, but not as a rule. Only ignorance will die with you and be reborn with you. This is truly to be together in life and inseparable in death. It takes half of all that is yours, just like a shadow follows a form.

And, of course, you all know what we're referring to as ignorance? If you understand ignorance, then don't be so intimate with it after this. If you don't understand, you'd better figure it out fast. If you understand ignorance, then there's some hope for you. If you don't understand ignorance, then you are forever an ordinary person. If you understand ignorance, then you're halfway to sagehood. But you have to truly understand; you shouldn't seem to understand and yet not understand, so that you both have ignorance and do not have it.

"We have obtained these good roots of erudition and are said to have left the home life. Our propensity for learning is a kind of good root; but, **yet,** even though I'm called a left-home person, **in fact we act like someone with a recurrent fever."** The nature of this sickness is that it manifests only every other day, at a fixed time. The analogy represents his ignorance. Today he doesn't have any ignorance; his head is clear and he's not crazy. But tomorrow the ignorance crops up again. I believe that it's not only Ananda who has this problem; I suspect everyone present here has the same difficulty. Today you resolve your mind on Bodhi and decide to cultivate the Way, so you meditate single-mindedly. "I'm not going to pay attention to any thing that comes up. I'm going to put everything down." But then tomorrow you can't put it down. Once again you pick up all the things you ordinarily are attached to

and You can't let go of them. Even if you want to put them down, you can't loose your grasp on them. Do you see how pitiful it is? That's what's meant by a recurrent fever. So we should quickly find a way to cure this disease in ourselves. What's the cure? Drink more of the water of wisdom. Once you have wisdom, you will naturally see through things and be able to put them down. When you put them down, you obtain comfort. Why do you have this disease? It's because you consider your body to be very fine, with a pleasing appearance and physically fit, and you always have a scheme going on its behalf. You can't see through it or put it down.

But no matter how beautiful a physical form you may have, it will stink just the same when it's time to die. No one will get near you.

Sutra:

"I only hope that you, the Greatly Compassionate One, will take pity on us. We are sinking and drowning so that to this very day we do not know how our bodies and minds are in knots or how to go about untying them. Your explanation will also enable future living beings who are in suffering and difficulty to avoid the turning wheel and not fall into the three realms of existence."

Commentary:

Ananda is really pitiful. **"I only hope that you, the Greatly Compassionate One,** the World Honored One, will give rise to great compassion and **take pity on us. We are sinking and drowning so that to this very day we do not know how our bodies and minds are in knots.** We are so deeply sunk in delusion that we don't know about our present bodies and minds. Which of the six sense-organs does the knot start with, and which sense-organ does it end with? If I am to untie these knots, I have to start at the beginning. I can't pick it up halfway along and expect to unravel it, I don't know or **how to go about untying them.** Where do we untie them? **Your explanation will also enable future living beings –** I'm not just asking for myself. I have also brought

forth the mind of a Bodhisattva and want to help those **who are in suffering and difficulty,** so that they may **avoid the turning wheel and not fall into the three realms of existence.** If they know the method for untying the knots, they won't fall into the three realms of existence. They will avoid the suffering of the desire-realm, the form-realm, and the form less realm."

L3 He begs for instruction.

Sutra:

After saying this, he and the entire Great Assembly made full prostrations. He wept profusely, and with sincere anticipation awaited the unsurpassed instruction of the Buddha, the Thus Come One.

Commentary:

After saying this, after Ananda finished making his request, **he and the entire Great Assembly made full prostrations.** Literally, they "placed their five limbs on the ground." The five limbs are the legs, the arms, and the head. **He wept profusely, and with sincere anticipation –** do you see how indecisive Ananda is? From the beginning of the Sutra to this point he's cried six times, including this time. No one who is listening to the sutra now has cried. Doesn't that mean that you are all much stronger than Ananda? Ananda listens to Shakyamuni Buddha's discussions and explanations as they investigate the Dharma, and he cries. This time he cries very hard, profusely, like rain. His tears were probably enough to wash his face clean. "Anticipation" literally means to "stand on tiptoe;" this represents the depth of Ananda's sincerity. Perhaps this word is the origin of women's high heeled shoe. They read that Ananda was sincere to the point of being on tiptoe and they decided to walk around with the same attitude. He **awaited the unsurpassed instruction of the Buddha, the Thus Come One.**

I just said that everyone now listening to the sutra is better than Ananda, but you shouldn't, therefore, conclude that you are in fact better than Ananda. To tell the truth, I was poking fun at you.

"Oh?" you say, "the teacher has to poke fun at the disciples?"

If I didn't poke fun, you wouldn't bring forth the resolve to study. Ananda cried because he was so intent upon seeking the Dharma – so profoundly sincere. He realized that although he had been certified to the first fruit of Arhatship, he still was not clear about the Buddhadharma, so he felt very repentant. That is why he wept remorsefully. And why haven't you cried? I'll tell: basically you are unconcerned about the Buddhadharma. You don't place any importance on it.

"That's not so," you say. "Every day I study really hard."

That doesn't count, because you haven't yet taken the Buddhadharma to heart – to your true heart. If you had, you might cry every day. Now my disciples who like to cry figure they're off the hook. "I can continue to cry every day because I don't understand the Buddhadharma." But those of you who like to cry should not cry. You should try to get yourselves under control and calm down. And those who don't cry should feel ashamed and ask yourselves, "Why don't I understand the Buddhadharma?" If you can weep because of that, as remorsefully as Ananda does here, then there's some hope for you.

Those who don't mind crying, they can try it out. Those who don't like to cry won't be forced to do so. And those who enjoy crying can't cry. That's the way the Buddhadharma goes. Those who go too far should be reined in a bit. Those who don't go far enough should exert themselves a bit. That's the ultimate meaning of the Middle Way.

K2 The Thus Come One certifies that there is no other source.
L1 The prose.
M1 All Buddhas have identical accomplishment.
N1 He pities the assembly, rubs Ananda's crown, and influences the Buddhas.

Sutra:

Then the World Honored One took pity on Ananda and on those in the assembly with something left to study, as well as on

living beings of the future, in order to help them transcend the world and become eyes for the future.

Commentary:

"Then" is when Ananda asked the Buddha for his unsurpassed instruction. **The World Honored One took pity on Ananda and on those in the assembly with something left to study.** "Those with something left to study" refers to the first three fruitions of sagehood: the positions of Shrotaapanna, Sakridagamin, and Anagamin. **As well as on living beings of the future.** "The future" refers to our present time; we are the living beings of the future. **In order to help them transcend the world –** this is a proper cause. "The world" refers to ordinary beings. Those who transcend the world are the Sound-Hearers – the Arhats – Those Enlightened to Conditions, the Bodhisattvas, and the Buddhas. For the sake of helping them transcend the world and **become eyes for the future,** that they might be the eyes for all living beings in the future, the Buddha does something extraordinary.

Sutra:

He rubbed the crown of Ananda's head with his Jambunada purple-golden bright hand. Instantaneously all the Buddhalands in the ten directions quaked in six ways.

Commentary:

He rubbed the crown of Ananda's head with his Jambunada purple-golden bright hand. His hand was the color of the gold of the Jambu tree in Southern Jambudvipa. In Buddhism, the gesture of rubbing the crown of the head represents compassionate care and protection. **Instantaneously all the Buddhalands in the ten directions quaked in six ways.** The six kinds of earthquakes have been discussed before. When a person who is cultivating the Way opens enlightenment and accomplishes Buddhahood, the six earthquakes occur. When the Buddha is about to speak the unsurpassed wonderful Dharma, the six also occur. In the Dharma-ending Age, when someone is certified to the fruition of sagehood, the six kinds of earthquakes occur. There are various reasons for

them. When the heavenly demons and adherents of external paths want to harm someone, they can also make the earth quake, but not necessarily in these six ways. There is no fixed number to the kinds of earthquakes demons cause. For instance, recently there was an earthquake in the Philippines which was reported to have killed four hundred people, though I imagine that was a modest estimate. I believe it was at least five or six hundred, as I see it. That kind of incident is a response to living being's karma, in which the heavenly demons and adherents of external paths come to destroy our world. That's what happens whenever there's a natural disaster or a man-made calamity. But if there is a high Sanghan with great virtue at the place where a calamity is to occur, for instance in the Philippines, or if there is a Bodhisattva or an Arhat who has been certified to the fruition living at that place, then the disaster can be averted. When a person of greatly virtuous practice goes even into the most dangerous situations, he can turn the inauspicious into the auspicious; he can make difficulties become fortunate circumstances. He can cause the most dangerous moments to pass uneventfully.

The six kinds of quaking are: cracking, roaring, and striking, quaking, erupting, and heaving up. The first three belong to sound; the second three belong to motion. Quaking is a movement back and forth. Erupting is a sharp upward thrust, looking like a breaker on the ocean. Heaving up is a gradual rising, like the movement of an elevator.

When the earth quakes, a sound occurs. One day here in San Francisco the earth quaked and the windows all began to rattle. "Danger, danger," they were saying. I noticed one person got scared at that point and put her palms together. Others noticed her and followed suit. Cracking brings sound, but when there is roaring, the very earth itself cries out like the roar of a lion. Striking occurs when the earth splits and the two parts scrape against one another.

What do the six kinds of earthquakes represent? Why does the great earth tremble and move in six ways at this point in the

Shurangama Sutra, when the Buddha is rubbing the crown of Ananda's head? It's because the Buddha is about to proclaim very important Dharma. All the Buddhas of the ten directions have come to praise him in a single voice. That's the situation. It also represents the liberation of the six sense-organs – the release of the six knots. Ananda has just asked about the source of the six knots and how to end them. He asked where their beginning and end are. And the Buddha is about to explain this doctrine, so he rubbed the crown of Ananda's head and the great earth trembled and moved in six ways.

N2 All Buddhas emit light and anoint their crowns.

Sutra:

Thus Come Ones as numerous as fine motes of dust, each dwelling in his respective world, emitted a precious light from the crown of his head.

Commentary:

Thus Come Ones as numerous as fine motes of dust – that many Buddhas – **each dwelling in his respective world.** Each Buddha was dwelling in his own Buddhaland. Each **emitted a precious light from the crown of his head.** Each of these many Buddhas emitted a rare light from the top of his head. Some lights were red, some were white, some were yellow, some were blue – all kinds of lights were emitted from the crown of their heads-Thus Come Ones as numerous as fine motes of dust emitted these various lights in order to represent the supremacy of the Dharma that the Buddha was about to speak and to demonstrate that it was an ultimately high, wonderful Dharma, the Dharma of the Great Buddha's Summit.

Sutra:

At one and the same time their light went from their own countries to the Jeta Grove and anointed the crown of the Thus Come One's head. All in that Great Assembly obtained what they had never had before.

Commentary:

At one and the same time their light, the light that the Thus Come Ones as numerous as fine motes of dust emitted from the crowns of their heads, **went from their own countries –** from the land in which each Buddha was dwelling **– to the Jeta Grove.** Note that it was the light that came to the Jeta Grove, not the Buddhas themselves. The light from each of the Thus Come Ones as many as the sands of the Ganges River and as numerous as fine motes of dust, came to anoint **the crown of the Thus Come One's head**, of Shakyamuni Buddha. This demonstrates that the Way of all Buddhas is the same. The Dharma you speak is the Dharma I also speak. It is one and the same. The light is interpenetrating and people's minds are also interpenetrating. The Buddhas' lights are interpenetrating and so are the Buddhas' minds. The same is true of people's minds. If you are upset in your mind with someone, that person will realize it, even if you haven't said a word. It's not that the person knows it consciously, on the level of his sixth mind-consciousness which makes discriminations, but there is a response that occurs in his eighth consciousness. He has an awareness on the level of the eighth consciousness because people's minds are interpenetrating. Science has now discovered this, that there is an invisible connection, like a telegram, that can arrive very quickly even from afar. And people's minds have a mutual telegraphic system. It cannot be seen with the ordinary eye, but if you genuinely obtain the perfectly fused and unobstructed Buddha-Eye, you will see why you are aware of the arising of another's thoughts. It's because he has sent out a telegram. If you open the Buddha-Eye or the Wisdom-Eye, you will know naturally and will be able to see it.

Because of these telegrams, people realize it as soon as you have the thought that you disagree with them. Your telegram arrives, and they become upset with you in turn. Some people have good feelings about others, and that, too, is known by the other person, but the response is slower. If you want to influence someone to change by means of positive reinforcement, then you

can use all kinds of good thoughts to influence them, but the process will be gradual. Bit by bit you can cause them to awaken. As they awaken, their response will be positive in turn.

Now that I've explained this telegraphic system that operates between people, some may not believe what I've said; nevertheless, it's true. In the future, when you actually open your Buddha-Eye, you won't have any doubts about this doctrine. Then you will realize, "Oh, I didn't believe it at the time, but it's actually true."

The anointing of the crown of the Thus Come One represents the identity of the Way of all Buddhas and the shining of their light upon one another. The Summit-Dharma they speak is one and the same.

All in that Great Assembly obtained what they had never had before. No one understood what they saw going on. "Ah? Why are the Buddhas of the ten directions emitting light that is shining upon our Buddha? What's the principle behind this?" Can you imagine how many rays of light were being sent there by Thus Come Ones as numerous as fine motes of dust? The light was immeasurable. But it was not the least bit mixed up. Each one very clearly illumined the crown of the Thus Come One's head. Those who had opened their Buddha-Eyes, those who had attained the first three fruitions of Arhatship, did not understand what they saw. Even those who had attained the fourth fruition of Arhat ship did not understand it clearly. The reason they didn't understand is that they had never seen such a thing before. "Obtained what they had never had before" means they had never experienced anything like this.

N3 They hear the Buddhas speak with one sound.

Sutra:

Then Ananda and everyone in the Great Assembly heard the Thus Come Ones as numerous as fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions speak to Ananda with different mouths but in a single voice.

Commentary:

Then Ananda and everyone in the Great Assembly, the great Bodhisattvas, the great Arhats, the great Bhikshus, **heard the Thus Come Ones as numerous as fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions.** All these people became as one person, each person was a part of the whole. At the same time they all heard the Thus Come Ones **speak to Ananda with different mouths but in a single voice.** Although there were many mouths, the voice was the same. What they had to say is meant not only for Ananda, but also for you and me and all those present listening to the Sutra. This instruction is a very important section of the *Shurangama Sutra*. It concerns a crucial point: the matter of birth and death. If you understand this section, you can quickly put an end to birth and death. If you don't understand it, you'll have to double your efforts and make progress in your study and practice.

Sutra:

"Good indeed, Ananda! You wish to recognize your innate ignorance that causes you to turn on the wheel. The origin of the knot of birth and death is simply your six sense-organs and nothing else.

Commentary:

These words make it absolutely crystal clear. It is stated as plainly as it can be. If we truly understood it now, we would obtain liberation on the spot. If you haven't understood, you have to keep on investigating it. Thus Come Ones as numerous as fine motes of dust speak to Ananda with different mouths but a single voice, first of all praising him. **"Good indeed, Ananda!"** they say, like one would to a child. "You're a good boy. Very good, really smart!" They praise and flatter him first to draw his attention. And, once they've got his attention they tell him the truth. "You are very intelligent, Ananda, because **you wish to recognize your innate ignorance.** You want to know some genuine principle and learn about the ignorance that came with you at birth." It is also referred to as the "ignorance which appears with production." It **"causes**

you to turn on the wheel." of the six paths of rebirth, bobbing up and down, being born here, dying there, and then being reborn in yet another place, in this life perhaps a Westerner, in the next life a Chinese, in the next a Japanese, the one after that an Indian, and in the life after that an African. Who sends you out to do this? Who tells someone to become a Japanese? Who tells someone to be a Chinese? Who tells someone to be a Westerner or an Easterner, or a Northerner or a Southerner? Nothing else than your innate ignorance does it. Because there is ignorance, one gives rise to delusion, and upon the arising of delusion one creates karma. Upon the creation of karma one must undergo retribution. For instance: "In this life I'll go to Africa. There are a lot of diamonds there. On the Gold Coast there are more riches than are found in America. It's still not developed, so if I am reborn there and develop it, won't I be wealthy? I'll be one of the world's richest people." From that one false thought you make a false move and end up in Africa, to develop the Gold Coast and mine diamonds. Those who like America will go there, those who like Australia will go there. Those who like Europe will go there, those who like Asia will go there. It's up to you. Whatever karma you create, you undergo that reward or retribution. You go there to be a person and once you get there you don't know how it happened. And then you don't know where you are headed next. The dream of riches is over, but you still haven't awakened. It's pitiful, isn't it? The dream of riches never ends, and when the time comes to die, the mine isn't finished, yet the life is exhausted.

"The origin of the knot of birth and death is simply your six sense-organs and nothing else." The root of birth and death becomes bound into a knot from which you cannot escape. What is it? It is nothing but a trick of your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. These six bring about your death and your birth. Did you know that? Nothing else is responsible. What keeps us so upside down, life after life and death after death, is simply your six sense organs.

Why? The eyes see defiling objects of form and are turned around by then. The ears hear sounds and chase after them. The nose smells fragrances and goes out after them. The tongue tastes flavors and seeks after them. The body is touched and pursues the objects of touch. The mind entertains dharmas and races after dharmas. Tell me, how many things do you have altogether? So many! Following out after the six sense-organs, you become divided in six departments. You're like a business with six different departments and each takes a little money until the business is bankrupt. So you end up dying. Bankrupt. Closed down. Out of business. And with the little capital you have left, you puzzle over where you're going to open another business. Then you go somewhere else and open a new company. And there you are again, doing the same thing over again. Six bosses are in their offices expecting to do good business, but in the end it doesn't work out, and the work stops again. That's where the problem of birth and death comes from. Earlier in the sutra the Buddha admonished, "You only need not follow." You shouldn't follow the discriminating mind. You should not pursue the activities of the six organs, the six objects, and the six consciousnesses. Don't go along with them. Turn around to the shore.

The sea of suffering is boundless,
But a turn of the head finds the shore.

A turn of the head finds the shore of enlightenment. If you don't turn around, then the more confused you get, the deeper you go in. The deeper you go in, the more confused you get. You get into debt to a lot of people, and your books are never in balance. Now that you recognize the six organs, you should not mistake a thief for your own son. Don't keep spinning around at the portals of the six organs. Come back. Come back. To where? To the Buddhist Lecture Hall!

Sutra:

"You also want to understand unsurpassed Bodhi, so that you can quickly realize bliss, liberation, tranquility, and wonderful permanence. It, too, is your six sense-organs and nothing else."

Commentary:

Just before this passage, the sutra said that it is the six sense-organs that cause you to undergo birth and death, to give rise to delusion, to create karma, and to undergo retribution. But you should not despise the six sense-organs. You can't say, "You six things are horrible! I'm going to pluck out my eyes and pitch them some place far away. I'm going to cut off my ears and cast them aside as well. I'll lop off my nose and cut out my tongue. In fact, I'll dismember my body and grind up my bones and be done with the whole thing. I'll shred my heart to bits and scatter it into emptiness, and let it return to the great void that way."

That attitude is also a mistake. People who cultivate the Way can't give rise to hatred. Although the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind don't treat you well – like in business, they're all embezzlers; still you don't fire them. Why not? Because, although they are not good now, they will help you if they change. If they stop their embezzling, they can help you make a profit.

This section of text says that if you become enlightened and obtain permanence, bliss, true self, and purity, it is the six sense-organs that bring it about. It is thanks to them that it happens.

This is like the analogy of water and ice. Water can be in liquid or solid form; it can be beneficial to people or it can harm them. So you can't lose your temper and say you don't want your eyes and ears. If you don't want your eyes, you become blind. If you don't want your ears, you go deaf. If you don't want your nose, you turn into some weird thing. If you don't want your tongue, you can't speak, and if you don't want your body, you wouldn't have anything at all; you'd turn into dull emptiness. Nor can you do without your mental processes. Thus, the Buddhas of the ten

directions now say to Ananda: “**You also want to understand** the method for untying the knot, right?” Notice that these two sections of the Sutra are not spoken by Shakyamuni Buddha alone. It is the Buddhas of the ten directions as numerous as fine motes of dust – limitless and boundless numbers of Buddhas – who are speaking now. “Very good, Ananda, you are a fine person. You are truly a good cultivator. You also want to know about **unsurpassed Bodhi.**” The “Bodhi” referred to here is the cause for Bodhi. It cannot be explained as the Bodhi-result in this case. The meaning is, “You also want to bring forth the resolve for unsurpassed Bodhi so that you can obtain the Bodhi-result, **so that you can quickly realize bliss, liberation, tranquility, and wonderful permanence.”** I assume that everyone under stands what “quickly” means here, that everyone is eager to become a Buddha as soon as possible. The Four Virtues of Nirvana are what is meant here: “Bliss” is the virtue of bliss-while “liberation” is the virtue of true self. If you have a self, you are not free. If you want to obtain liberation, you have to be without a self. You obtain the true self and are liberated from the false self. “Tranquility” represents the virtue of purity. “Wonderful permanence” represents the virtue of permanence. These are the four virtues of Nirvana Without Residue, and **“It, too, is your six sense-organs and nothing else.”** Do you understand now, Ananda?” But after the Buddhas of the ten directions had spoken this doctrine, Ananda still didn’t understand. When you are confused, then no matter how clearly someone may explain to you, you still do not understand it clearly yourself. “What’s this mean, anyway? Birth and death are caused by the six sense-organs, but when one becomes liberated and is certified to the fruition, it is also caused by the six sense-organs. How can these six organs be responsible for what is bad and for what is good?” He doesn’t understand. But people can be both good and bad. Today some one feels good and wants to help people. “I want to give to the poor,” he says and he takes out his money and gives it away. But the next day he’s broke and thinks, “Yesterday I gave all my money away and today I don’t have any to spend. I’ll get my gun and go

rob someone." So he turns into a bad person. Who was it who did good? It was he. Who was it who did bad things? It was he also.

I say to you, then, the one who becomes a ghost is the same one who becomes a Buddha. But for the most part, Americans don't believe in ghosts. Why do I keep bringing up ghosts even though you don't believe in them? Since I'm not a ghost, I dare talk about them. If you believe in the Buddha, you should also believe that there are ghosts. After all, Buddhas come from ghosts. If you do things well, you become a Buddha. If you don't do things well, you end up a ghost. By the same token, the six sense-organs cause your births and deaths; they also bring about your certification to the fruition. If there aren't any ghosts, then there aren't any people, either, or any Buddhas. There isn't anything at all, and the world will go to wrack and ruin. People who say they believe in Buddhas but don't believe that there are ghosts are so obstinate that even if the Buddha were in the world, he couldn't teach them. The Buddha says very clearly in the sutras that there are ghosts; why don't you believe that they exist? "Other religions talk about ghosts and spirits," you argue. But you can't choose to believe that there are no ghosts and spirits just because another religion says that there are. The reason that other religions discuss them is that in fact they exist. Just because you don't believe in a certain religion doesn't mean you can reject what is true in its doctrines, such as the existence of ghosts and spirits. Such people may think themselves smart, but they're witless. Not only do they completely fail to understand Buddhist doctrine, they don't even understand human existence. Pitiful!

M2 The Thus Come One explains in detail.
N1 Ananda has not yet awakened and so asks a question.

Sutra:

Ananda heard these sounds of Dharma, but he did not yet understand in his mind. Bowing his head, he said to the Buddha, "How can what causes me to revolve in the cycle of birth and death and what enables me to gain bliss and

wonderful permanence be the six sense-organs in both cases and nothing else?"

Commentary:

Ananda heard Shakyamuni Buddha and the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions as numerous as fine motes of dust, speaking with different mouths but in a single voice, say that the source of birth and death is the six sense organs and that the bliss and permanence of the Nirvana of Bodhi is also brought about by the six sense-organs and nothing else. But Ananda didn't understand. **Ananda heard these sounds of Dharma,** he listened to the subtle, wonderful, inconceivable sounds of Dharma, **but he did not yet understand in his mind.** And since he didn't understand, therefore, **bowing his head, he said to the Buddha –** he bowed from the waist to the Buddha – **"How can what causes me to revolve in the cycle of birth and death –** spinning again and again on the wheel of rebirth – **and what enables me to gain bliss and wonderful permanence" –** these two that Ananda mentions include liberation and tranquility as well – **"be the six sense-organs in both cases and nothing else?"** I don't understand this principle.

N2 The Thus Come One explains in detail and gets rid of his doubts.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "The sense-organs and the objects are of the same source. The bonds and the release are not two. The nature of the consciousnesses is empty and false; it is like strange flowers in space.

Commentary:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "The sense-organs and the objects are of the same source." The six sense-organs, the six sense-objects, and the six sense-consciousnesses come from the same source. If there weren't six organs, there wouldn't be six objects, and if there weren't six objects, there wouldn't be six consciousnesses. The three are one; the one is three. **The bonds**

and the release are not two." "Bonds" refers to the knots. "Release" refers to their untying. These two are non-dual. There's no fundamental difference between them. The bonds are the release; the release is the bonds. When you don't understand, they are knots. When you understand, it is liberation. The knot is release. It depends on your own ability. **"The nature of the consciousnesses is empty and false.** The nature of the six consciousnesses has no substance or appearance. **It is like strange flowers in space."** Do you remember the person with the eye-disease? His staring caused fatigue and the appearance of strange flowers in space. The six organs, six objects, and six consciousnesses are just like the strange flowers in space. They are completely unreal in themselves. Good comes to them, and so does evil. In the same way, one person can be both good and evil. Although "good" and "evil" are different words, they refer to the same person.

Sutra:

"Ananda, sense-awareness arises because of the sense objects: the appearance of objects exists because of the sense-organs. The appearance and the perception, both devoid of a nature, support each other like intertwining reeds.

Commentary:

"Ananda, sense-awareness arises because of the sense objects. A discriminating knowing and perception arise due to the six sense-objects. **The appearance of objects exists because of the sense-organs.** The appearance of the six sense-objects arises due to the six sense-organs. **The appearance and the perception, both devoid of a nature, support each other like intertwining reeds.** "Perception" here refers to the sense-awareness first mentioned. Neither the appearance nor the awareness has an inherent self-nature; the appearance arises only because the six sense-organs match with the six sense objects. It is therefore not real; it is empty and false. The perception is also empty and false. They "support each other like intertwining reeds." The reeds referred to here have a common root, from which the two reeds

grow. They will only stand if there are two, one by itself will fall down. The six organs, six objects, and six consciousnesses are the same way. The organs and objects must work together to bring about the six consciousnesses. One alone will not stand. To further the analogy, the reeds are hollow, so that there appears to be something substantial to them when one looks at them, but they are ultimately empty inside. That represents the empty falseness of the six organs and objects.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you now base your knowledge on awareness and perception; but that is fundamental ignorance. The absence of a view regarding awareness and perception is Nirvana – the true purity of no outflows. How could there by anything else in the midst of it?"

Commentary:

"Therefore, you now base your knowledge on awareness and perception. You set up another awareness and perception based on an awareness and perception that are in themselves wrong. **But that is fundamental ignorance. The absence of a view regarding awareness and perception is Nirvana.** You realize that your awareness and perception are basically non existent, and so you establish no opinion based on them. To have no awareness and perception in the midst of awareness and perception is to be in accord with the Way. It is Nirvana and **the true purity of no outflows. How could there by anything else in the midst of it?** In the midst of the absence of awareness and perception, how could you harbor anything else? That place is pure at its origin and pervades the Dharmarealm. Why would you want to add anything to it? Why add awareness and perception to awareness and perception?" This principle is like the one in the passage above that states, "Basic enlightenment is necessarily bright but is falsely referred to as bright enlightenment."

L2 The verses.
MI Mention of the verses.

Sutra:

Then the World Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke verses, saying:

Commentary:

Then Shakyamuni, **the World Honored One,** knew that Ananda had still not understood the answer to his question: **wishing,** then, **to restate this meaning,** he **spoke verses, saying**. Verses have a fixed number of syllables in each line; perhaps five, six, or seven in the Chinese.

Sutra:

"In the true nature, conditioned things are empty.
They spring from causes, as illusions do.
Things unconditioned neither rise nor cease.
Unreal they are, like flowers in space.

Commentary:

"In the true nature, that is, in the absence of any falseness; a falseness, nonetheless, relies on the true nature to come into being. Thus, **conditioned things** arise out of true emptiness. But the conditioned dharmas **are empty.**

"They spring from causes, as illusions do. Conditioned dharmas arise when certain conditions are present. But, once conditions arise, they will also cease to be. Thus, the fundamental substance is emptiness. That's why it's said to be like an illusion.

"Things unconditioned neither rise nor cease." You say that conditioned dharmas are empty. What about unconditioned dharmas? Are they empty, too?" Yes. They are not born and do not become extinct. Wouldn't you call the neither rising nor ceasing emptiness? **Unreal they are, like flowers in space.** They don't have a substantial nature; they are not real, just like the strange flowers in space."

Sutra:

> ***"To speak of the false is to reveal the true.***
> ***But both the false and the true are false themselves.***
> ***If there is neither truth nor untruth,***
> ***How can there be perceiver and perceived?***

Commentary:

"To speak of the false is to reveal the true." Why do we talk about falseness? It is in order to manifest all T that is true. But true and false are opposites, and so they , are not ultimate Dharmas. In his Song of Enlightenment, the Great Master Yung Chia says:

> *When the true is not set up,*
> *the false is basically empty;*
> *When both existence and non-existence are dispelled,*
> *What wasn't empty is made empty.*

There isn't any true. The false is basically empty, but the true doesn't exist, either. What's to be called true? The true does not remain. Nor is there any existence or non existence. You have to make empty what is not empty: this is the same principle. The false is spoken to reveal the true. But the true and the false that you speak about are both false. They are not true. If they were true, how could there by a false among them? There isn't anything at all: that is the Dharma Realm of true emptiness. It is the One True Dharma Realm, the Dharma Realm of True Suchness. In it not a single dharma is established. As soon as you speak about the true by comparing it to falseness, then the true becomes false. The true referred to is no longer fundamental truth. Both are false because they are opposites. At its ultimate point, Buddhism is absolute; there are no dualities. True and false are still at the level of opposites and in the realm of duality. The true which is the opposite of the false is itself false.

"If there is neither truth nor untruth": the Buddha explains that it appears to be true, but that it is not fundamental truth. As soon as a name is applied to it, it be comes a secondary truth, not

the primary truth. **"How can there be perceiver and perceived?"** How can you say there is a subjective perceiver and an object perceived? The subjectivity of the "seeing division" and of the six defiling objects – the "appearance division," which is what is perceived – cannot be spoken of, because they do not exist.

Sutra:

> ***"Between them the two in fact have no nature.***
> ***Thus they are likened to entwining reeds.***
> ***The knots and their release have a common cause.***
> ***The sages' and ordinary people's paths are not two.***

Commentary:

"Between them the two in fact have no nature. In the midst of the true and the false – the six organs, the six objects, and the six consciousnesses – there is no nature that actually exists. **Thus they are likened to entwining reeds. The knots and their release have a common cause.** When you do not understand, you get tied up in knots and cannot undo them. When you understand and obtain liberation, you know that the cause of both the knots and their release was the same. Lack of understanding is the knots; understanding is the release. **The sages' and ordinary people's paths are not two.** Holy people and ordinary people don't tread separate paths. A sage is someone who understands the principle of things. He has fathomed the myriad aspects of the entire universe and thus has a sage's wisdom. An ordinary person, when he does not understand, turns his back on enlightenment and unites with the defilements of the world. So, an ordinary person,

> *Turns his back on enlightenment*
> *and unites with the dust.*

A sage,

> *Turns his back on the dust,*
> *and unites with enlightenment.*

If you renounce enlightenment, you become one with the de filing appearances of conditioned dharmas. But, basically, the sage and the ordinary person are not on different roads.

Why aren't their paths different?

One is confused and the other has awakened. But the source of confusion and enlightenment is one. Here we are speaking of ultimate dharmas:

Sweep away all dharmas,
Separate from all appearances.

Sutra:

"Regard the nature of the intertwined.
Emptiness, existence both are naught.
Dark confusion is simply ignorance;
Bringing it to light is liberation.

Commentary:

"Ananda, **regard the nature of the intertwined.** Minutely examine the intertwining reeds – especially the nature that lies between them. What nature do the intertwining reeds have? None at all! There is neither emptiness nor existence in evidence. **Emptiness, existence both are naught.** You may say that it's empty, yet there is something there. You may say that it exists, but, in fact, it doesn't. The intertwining reeds represent the non-existent quality of both conditioned and unconditioned dharmas. You should understand this.

"Dark confusion is simply ignorance. This means that, with reference to your six sense-organs, when you do not understand, when you have not yet awakened, you are confused about true emptiness. A darkness grows in the emptiness; that's where ignorance comes from. In the pure nature and bright substance of your everlasting true mind, confusion grows into ignorance. **Bringing it to light is liberation.** If you discover this, there is no

ignorance. You discover your inherent, enlightened nature. This discovery is just liberation.

In the past, there was a monk of the Ch'an School who heard about an enlightened High Sanghan with virtue in the Way. He went to request instruction from him. In Buddhism, asking for instruction is a very formal affair. It isn't just a matter of tossing out a casual question and getting a casual answer back. Since the instruction is given for the sake of ending birth and death, the whole matter is looked upon quite seriously. It's necessary to put on good robes and the sash and take your sitting cloth with you. When you arrive in the Master's presence, you completely open out your sitting cloth, spread it on the ground, bow three times, and then kneel erect on both knees with your palms together. Then you can ask about whatever you don't understand.

What did the monk ask? He wanted to know how to obtain liberation. He sought release. How could he get free? This was his question to the Superior Seated One, that is, to the Sanghan who had held the precepts for a long time, one whose general status among the Sangha was of long standing.

The monk asked, "If you please, Superior Seated One, how can I become liberated?"

The elder Sanghan retorted, "Who's tying you up?" With that one sentence, the monk asking for instruction became enlightened. Was it really just that one sentence that caused his enlightenment? Yes and no.

"How can that be?" you wonder.

Almost always, a situation can be looked at from both sides and explained in more than one way.

"Isn't that just being evasive or vague?"

No, not if you can really speak to the principle involved. In this case, we can say that it was just that one sentence that brought about the monk's enlightenment, because the old cultivator who said it had looked into the causes and conditions that had brought

the monk to the point of asking for liberation. He knew that his answer, "Who's tying you up?" would give the monk an immediate understanding – an enlightenment. Therefore, he chose to answer in that way. Even so, there are times when a person doesn't become enlightened, even though one wants him to. This time, however, we can say that the old cultivator was successful with his sentence and that he enabled that student of Ch'an to obtain enlightenment.

On the other hand, how can it be explained that it was not just that one sentence that brought about the monk's enlightenment? Ordinarily that monk cultivated on a daily basis to develop his skill in meditation. He'd been cultivating for a long time but still had not had a breakthrough. Even so, every day he worked on it and every day his wisdom grew. He hadn't actually become enlightened, but he was close. Then, the one sentence that the Superior Seated Sanghan spoke was opportune, and he suddenly became enlightened. He encountered the mixing and uniting of causes and conditions, and so as soon as the high Sanghan pointed the Way, he understood. There is a saying:

Sitting ten years in contemplation alone
in the mountain wilds,
Isn't as good as a slight indication
given by a Bright Advisor.

A "Bright Advisor" means a "Bright-Eyed" Advisor, that is, someone who has opened the Buddha-Eye. A Good Knowing One like this can look into causes and conditions. He speaks Dharmas that accord with the point to which your causes and conditions are developed. So you may sit ten years in the mountains, but it won't match having a Bright-Eyed Advisor point out a bright path to you.

Therefore, drawing near a Good and Wise Advisor is very important in Buddhism. Among elder monks, there are very, very few who are genuine Bright-Eyed Advisors. They may be Good and Wise Advisors, but not necessarily "bright-eyed," that is, they may not have opened their five eyes. You should not think this is

such an easy thing to do, either. Opening the Buddha-Eye is certainly not the same as certification to the fruitions of Arhatship, but it does require that you have good roots in past lives.

To be able to open the Buddha-Eye, one has to have single-mindedly cultivated the Dharmas of Great Compassion, specifically the Forty-Two Greatly Compassionate Hands and Eyes. If you have cultivated these earnestly, you can open the Buddha-Eye, that is a Dharma that "gets you through the gate." If a person who has opened the Buddha-Eye leaves the home life, he or she can save a lot of beings, but it all depends on causes and conditions. Those of you who would like to open the Buddha-Eye should be extremely rigorous in your cultivation of the Forty-Two Hands and Eyes. Never miss a day in your practice. And most important, you can't smoke cigarettes if you cultivate this Dharma. If you try to do both, the Dharma-protecting good spirits will reprimand you. So don't be sloppy about it.

I hope every one of you will be very attentive to the practice of the Forty-Two Hands and Eyes. Never miss a day, and even at that, it will take several years of skill before you have any success. If you have cultivated them in previous lives, then your progress will be more rapid. You will open the Wisdom-Eye very quickly.

N2 Finally the explanatory gatha.
O1 The explanation.

Sutra:

> ***"The knots must be untied successively.***
> ***When the six are released, even the one ceases to be.***
> ***Select an organ preferred for perfect penetration;***
> ***Enter the flow and realize proper enlightenment.***

Commentary:

"The knots must be untied successively." It is necessary to follow an order in releasing the knots.

"How does one release them successively? How did they get bound together in the first place?" you ask.

To begin with, the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One is not subject to production and extinction. But, confusion takes on the aspect of emptiness – delusion and obscurity make emptiness.

At that point, ignorance arises. Therefore, although the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One is neither produced nor destroyed, relying on truth, a falseness arises, and with it the mind subject to production and extinction – a consciousness. This consciousness divides into the sixth, seventh, and eighth consciousnesses. But the source of the eighth consciousness, which is founded on ignorance that creates production and extinction, is the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, which is not subject to production or extinction. Its source is the pure nature and bright substance of the eternal true mind.

Relying on truth a falseness arises, the Treasury of the Thus Come One changes into the Alaya consciousness, the eighth consciousness, also called the "storehouse" consciousness.

The eighth consciousness is the basis for the existence of the Five Skandhas: form, feeling, thought, activity, and consciousness. Starting with the skandha of consciousness, one progresses to the skandha of activity. This is the seventh consciousness, the Manas consciousness (末那識) also called the "transmitting" consciousness (傳送識). This consciousness transmits messages from the sixth consciousness to the eighth consciousness. It forms the activity skandha.

The next skandha is that of thought; this is the sixth consciousness, the mind-consciousness. The feeling skandha is the first five consciousnesses of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body. The skandhas of feeling, thought, activity, and consciousness correspond to one knot each. The form-skandha counts as two knots, because it is coarser. Thus, the six knots start with the eighth consciousness and progress through the seventh and the sixth, and then through the five. With the existence of the five skandhas, the Five Turbidities come into being, producing all kinds of obstructions.

If we want to untie these knots we must first stop chasing after the skandha of form. Once these two knots are broken open, then the other skandhas of feeling, thought, activity, and consciousness are released as well; the six knots are all untied. “The knots must be untied successively,” because the skandha of form is composed of coarse knots, while the remaining skandhas of feeling, thought, activity, and consciousness are extremely subtle.

“So why do they begin their formation from the inside and work outward?” you wonder.

It is because the eighth consciousness is the first to arrive at conception. It all starts with the eighth consciousness. The five skandhas and the eighth consciousness become bound together in the knot of birth and death. It starts with the eighth consciousness; you release it by starting with the form skandha. The process can be likened to removing clothes. You take off an outer layer, and an inner layer is revealed. In this way, you take off layer after layer until you have removed them all; then the knot is untied. That’s how it’s explained, but actually if you release one knot, the other five will disappear as well. The verse says, **“When the six are released, even the one ceases to be.”** When the six sense-organs, the knots, are freed, the one disappears as well. This will be explained in detail later in the text.

“Select an organ preferred for perfect penetration.” The method for cultivation is applying effort right at the entrance to the six organs. That is, the eyes are not turned by forms, the ears are not turned by sounds, the nose is not turned by smells, the tongue is not turned by flavors, the body is not turned by objects of touch, and the mind is not turned by dharmas. You transform what takes place at the entrance to the six organs. You return the light to illumine within; you do not seek outside. Guard and gather in your body and mind. Seek within yourself.

In cultivating the six organs, you have to select one organ which will lead you to perfect penetration. The Buddha has already laid the groundwork for this. He discussed the efficacy of twelve

hundred of each of the organs and told Ananda to see which organs were more complete. The eyes, for instance, are not complete, but the ears are. The tongue and the mind are also complete organs. Three are complete and three are not. You are to select a complete organ and then develop your skill in cultivation with regard to it. Shakyamuni Buddha has tacitly implied that the organ of the ear will lead to perfect penetration, but he has not come right out and said it. He wants Ananda to make his own selection; he wants him to figure it out for himself.

Select an organ preferred for perfect penetration, and **"enter the flow and realize proper enlightenment."**

Enter the flow of the Dharma-nature
of the Sages.
Turn against the flow of the six sense-objects
of an ordinary person.

After entering the flow, one can accomplish proper enlightenment, that is, become a Buddha.

O2 Specific passage about the supreme meanings.

Sutra:

"Extremely subtle, the Adana consciousness
Makes patterns of habit that flow on in torrents.
Fearing you will confuse the truth with what is not,
I rarely tell you of all this.

Commentary:

This is Dharma which Shakyamuni Buddha rarely speaks. "I rarely tell you of all this," I don't ever like to explain this Dharma. Just imagine: Shakyamuni Buddha rarely explained this Dharma for the great Arhats, the great Bodhisattvas, and the great Bhikshus, and yet how easily we have had the opportunity to hear this wonderful Dharma spoken by the Buddha!

"Extremely subtle, the Adana (陀那) consciousness." This is a very subtle consciousness, even more so than the eighth. The "Adana" is also called the "pure" consciousness. It is the seed of purity.

"This especially fine and subtle consciousness **makes patterns of habit that flow on in torrents.** This is the source of our birth and death. As soon as falseness arises in the One Truth of that subtle consciousness, one thought of ignorance, it turns into habits that come on like a torrent. Nothing will curtail them." Here the torrent refers to our birth and death. Being born and dying, in birth and death, again and again, sometimes a person, sometimes an animal, sometimes born as a god, sometimes falling into the hells, spinning ceaselessly – patterns of habit flow on in torrents.

"Fearing you will confuse the truth with what is not, I rarely tell you of all this. Why isn't the true Dharma talked about? Why don't I express the subtle wonder of the genuine Dharma for you? I'm afraid people will think that the true is false and that they will think what is really false is true. For example, you were determined to add 'bright' to 'enlightenment,' and by doing so you just add confusion to confusion and become doubly deluded.

"Normally I don't explain this wonderful Dharma. I speak the Small Vehicle doctrines for you Small Vehicle people. The genuine, wonderful Dharma of the Great Vehicle is something I've never told you about before. I haven't done so because you people of the Small Vehicle still don't have the stature to hear it. You haven't turned from the small toward the great. So even when I wanted to explain it, I refrained.

Sutra:

> ***"With your own mind, you grasp at your own mind.***
> ***What is not illusory turns into illusion.***
> ***If you don't grasp, there is no non-illusion.***
> ***If even non-illusion does not arise,***
> ***How can illusory dharmas be established?***

This is called the Wonderful Lotus Flower,
The Regal Vajra Gem of Enlightenment.

Commentary:

“With your own mind, you grasp at your own mind.” Living beings do not understand that the division of seeing and the division of appearances are manifestations of the mind alone.

The three realms come only from consciousness;
The myriad dharmas spring only from the mind.

Not understanding that all things are made from the mind alone, they become attached to the seeing-division, that is, to their own subjective viewpoint – their eighth consciousness. The appearance-division refers to external objects. Basically, the division of seeing and the division of appearances are both empty and false. They are figments of your own mind. Most people never realize that they should return the light and illumine within. They just keep seeking out side themselves. They get confused about the true and chase after what is false. If you realize that the myriad dharmas come from your mind alone; if you

Recognize your own mind,
And see your own nature,

you will know that the two divisions of seeing and appearances arise from your own mind. If you understand the bright substance and pure nature of your eternal true mind, you will not run outside, but will return home.

“What is not illusory turns into illusion. Because living beings are confused about what is true and chase after what is false, they come to have doubts about what basically was not illusory, and so that becomes illusory. You must be able to not grasp at these illusory appearances. Not grasping is the important point here. The reason most people are confused by the six sense-organs and six sense objects is that they grasp at the two divisions of seeing and appearances. They become attached to the belief that their capacity

to see is the division of seeing and that what they see really exists. They don't know that it is empty and false – it is illusory. **If you don't grasp, there is no non-illusion.** There isn't any non-illusion. **If even non-illusion does not arise…** What is not empty and false basically does not come into being: there is no place where it is produced. **…How can illusory dharmas be established?** How can empty illusory dharmas exist? They don't.

"**This is called the Wonderful Lotus Flower,** wonderful and subtle." The lotus flower arises from the mud but is not defiled by it. It grows in mud but is itself pure. And, the flower and fruit appear simultaneously. "It is **the Regal Vajra Gem of Enlightenment.**" Vajra is the most durable and toughest substance. It represents wisdom. Nothing can destroy or break through genuine wisdom. "Regal" means free and easy, as a king is. "Gem of Enlightenment" refers to our true mind. If you can keep from grasping at the two divisions of seeing and appearances; if you can return to the source, then you can return to the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One by turning the consciousnesses into wisdom. Once the turning is accomplished, the two divisions turn into a Wonderful Lotus Flower – the gem of enlightenment.

Sutra:

> ***"In this Samapatti that is likened to illusion,***
> ***Transcend all study instantly.***

Commentary:

It is also called by another name, **Samapatti that is likened to illusion.** "Samapatti" is a Sanskrit word which means "holding equally," that is, the equal maintaining of the power of samadhi and the power of wisdom. With wisdom you can untie the six knots. With samadhi you will not create the six knots. In this samapatti, one should **transcend all study instantly."** "Instantly" is literally "in a finger-snap." In no time at all, one transcends the positions in which there is still study and arrives at the position of no further study, that is, the fourth fruition of Arhatship. The positions of the first, second, and third fruitions, where there is something left to

study, are transcended in a finger-snap, as one is certified to the fourth fruition, Arhatship.

Sutra:

> ***"This Abhidharma, incomparable***
> ***Is the single pathway through Nirvana's gate,***
> ***Taken by Bhagavans in all the ten directions."***

Commentary:

"This Abhidharma, incomparable": "Abhidharma" translates as "peerless." This refers to the kind of Dharma, the method, being discussed. **"Is the single pathway through Nirvana's gate –** it is the unsurpassed method to untie the knots **– taken by Bhagavans in all the ten directions."** "Bhagavan" in the transliterated pronunciation *pwo chye fan*, is found at the beginning of the fourth section of the Shurangama Mantra. It is a universal name for the Buddha, used and recognized by Buddhas, spirits, and ghosts in referring to Buddhas. Here "Bhagavan" is not translated, because the original word includes six meanings. A translation can render only one meaning. The six meanings of Bhagavan are:

1) Comfortable. The Buddha's nature is comfortable, in the same way that the name "Contemplate in Comfort" given to Gwan Yin Bodhisattva means that he is a comfortable Bodhisattva.

2) Dazzling. This meaning describes the Buddha's light, which pervades the Dharmarealm.

3) Decorous. The Buddha is correct in his bearing and never lax or lazy. We should try to be the same. When you listen to Sutras, you should sit in an appropriately respectful manner. Don't lounge or slouch or stretch out. It should be as if the Buddha himself were before you speaking the Dharma. Since we believe in the Buddha, we should show our respect to him. We shouldn't be lazy right before the Buddha's eyes; when listening to Sutras, you cannot lie down or go to sleep. You shouldn't lie down when reading Sutras, either. I've told you before that if you do that, you will become a snake in a future life. Snakes have to lie down even when they

move from place to place. They can't stand up. When you read a Sutra, you should sit up straight and perhaps place it on a table in front of you. If you have one degree of respect, you increase your wisdom by one degree. If you have ten degrees of respect, you increase your wisdom by ten degrees. If you have a hundred, thousand, or ten thousand degrees of respect, you increase your wisdom by the same amount. You also increase your good roots. The *Vajra Sutra* says it clearly: "There is a Buddha in any place that the Sutra text is found," a Buddha. Your respect will bring a response; if you lack respect, there won't be a response. Consider it as if Shakyamuni Buddha himself were lecturing the Sutra for you and the Venerable Ananda was by your side. And around you in the Great Assembly are all the Great Bodhisattvas as well. Let it be just like the Dharma Assembly on Magic Mountain. If you had that kind of respect, there would be no way you could fail to get enlightened.

"But Ananda had listened to so much of the teaching and still hadn't become enlightened. Can I become enlightened now, on first hearing it?" How do you know Ananda hadn't become enlightened? Maybe Ananda was intentionally pretending not to be enlightened so that the Buddha would speak the Sutra and we now can hear it. Ananda became a Buddha a long time ago, not to speak of his gaining any lesser enlightenment! He's just appearing as the spokesperson and acting like he doesn't understand. In fact, Ananda remembered every bit of the Dharma the Buddha spoke; how could he not have understood the principles the Buddha is explaining here? He has long since understood and is just requesting Dharma on behalf of us who are living beings now. He's a model, an example for us. You shouldn't think that you're smarter than Ananda. You're not…

4) Renowned. Everyone praises the Bhagavan; everyone respects him.

5) Lucky.

6) Honored and noble..

Since the title, Bhagavan, has these six meanings, it is not translated. Among the Five Kinds of Terms Not Translated, it is the one that has many meanings.

"…is the single pathway through Nirvana's gate." This Dharma-door is the one by which the Buddhas of the ten directions accomplished Buddhahood. They took the road that led to Nirvana.

L3 He discusses his enlightenment.

Sutra:

When Ananda and the Great Assembly heard the unsurpassed, compassionate instruction of the Buddha, the Thus Come One, this harmonious and brilliant Geya verse with its clear and penetrating wonderful principles, their hearts and eyes were opened, and they exclaimed that Dharma such as this had never been before.

Commentary:

When Ananda and the Great Assembly heard the unsurpassed, compassionate instruction of the Buddha, the Thus Come One: Ananda and everyone in the Great Assembly were influenced by the reiterative verse the Buddha spoke about the one path for entrance into Nirvana taken by all the Buddhas of the ten directions. Nothing could be more lofty than this compassionate explanation. This harmonious and brilliant Geya verse: "Geya," reiterative verse, recapitulates the prose which precedes it. Such verses have a fixed number of characters in each line in the Chinese, be it four, five, six, or seven. This verse's Dharma is expressed in a harmonious and illuminating way, so it is said to be "harmonious and brilliant," with its clear and penetrating wonderful principles. This subtle wonderful principle expresses what is absolutely fundamental and essential.

Their hearts and eyes were opened. Ananda and the members of the Great Assembly came to understand a great deal more doctrine than they ever had before. Their minds were clearer and their eyes were brighter, and this in turn increased their wisdom. Here, "eyes"

refers to the opening of the Wisdom-Eye. And they exclaimed that Dharma such as this had never been before. “This Dharma is so wonderful! There’s never been anything like it before!”

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When Buddhism first came to China from India, one of the most important tasks required for its establishment was the translation of the Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Chinese. This work involved a great many people, such as the renowned monk National Master Kumarajiva (fifth century), who led an assembly of over 800 people to work on the translation of the Tripitaka (Buddhist canon) for over a decade. Because of the work of individuals such as these, nearly the entire Buddhist Tripitaka of over a thousand texts exists to the present day in Chinese.

Now the banner of the Buddha’s Teachings is being firmly planted in Western soil, and the same translation work is being done from Chinese into English. Since 1970, the Buddhist Text Translation Society (BTTS) has been making a paramount contribution toward this goal. Aware that the Buddhist Tripitaka is a work of such magnitude that its translation could never be entrusted to a single person, the BTTS, emulating the translation assemblies of ancient times, does not publish a work until it has passed through four committees for primary translation, revision, editing, and certification. The leaders of these committees are Bhikshus (monks) and Bhikshunis (nuns) who have devoted their lives to the study and practice of the Buddha’s teachings. For this reason, all of the works of the BTTS put an emphasis on what the principles of the Buddha’s teachings mean in terms of actual practice and not simply hypothetical conjecture.

The translations of canonical works by the Buddhist Text Translation Society are accompanied by extensive commentaries by the Venerable Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua.

BTTS Publications

Buddhist Sutras. Amitabha Sutra, Dharma Flower (Lotus) Sutra, Flower Adornment (Avatamsaka) Sutra, Heart Sutra & Verses without a Stand, Shurangama Sutra, Sixth Patriarch Sutra, Sutra in Forty-two Sections, Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva, Vajra Prajna Paramita (Diamond) Sutra.

Commentarial Literature. Buddha Root Farm, City of 10000 Buddhas Recitation Handbook, Filiality: The Human Source, Herein Lies the Treasure-trove, Listen to Yourself Think Everything Over, Shastra on the Door to Understanding the Hundred Dharmas, Song of Enlightenment, The Ten Dharma Realms Are Not beyond a Single Thought, Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma, Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma during the 1993 Trip to Taiwan, Water Mirror Reflecting Heaven.

Biographical. In Memory of the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua, Pictorial Biography of the Venerable Master Hsü Yün, Records of High Sanghans, Records of the Life of the Venerable Master Hsüan Hua, Three Steps One Bow, World Peace Gathering, News from True Cultivators, Open Your Eyes Take a Look at the World, With One Heart Bowing to the City of 10000 Buddhas.

Children's Books. Cherishing Life, Human Roots: Buddhist Stories for Young Readers.

Musics, Novels and Brochures. Songs for Awakening, Awakening, The Three Cart Patriarch, City of 10000 Buddhas Color Brochure, Celebrisi's Journey, Heng Ch'au's Journal.

The Buddhist Monthly–Vajra Bodhi Sea is a monthly journal of orthodox Buddhism which has been published by the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, formerly known as the Sino-American Buddhist Association, since 1970. Each issue contains the most recent translations of the Buddhist canon by the Buddhist Text Translation Society. Also included in each issue are a biography of a great Patriarch of Buddhism from the ancient past, sketches of the lives of contemporary monastics and lay-followers around the world, articles on practice, and other material. The journal is bilingual, Chinese and English

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The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association

Mission

The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association (formerly the Sino-American Buddhist Association) was founded by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua in the United States of America in 1959. Taking the Dharma Realm as its scope, the Association aims to disseminate the genuine teachings of the Buddha throughout the world. The Association is dedicated to translating the Buddhist canon, propagating the Orthodox Dharma, promoting ethical education, and bringing benefit and happiness to all beings. Its hope is that individuals, families, the society, the nation, and the entire world will, under the transforming influence of the Buddhadharma, gradually reach the state of ultimate truth and goodness.

The Founder

The Venerable Master, whose names were An Tse and To Lun, received the Dharma name Hsuan Hua and the transmission of Dharma from Venerable Master Hsu Yun in the lineage of the Wei Yang Sect. He was born in Manchuria, China, at the beginning of the century. At nineteen, he entered the monastic order and dwelt in a hut by his mother's grave to practice filial piety. He meditated, studied the teachings, ate only one meal a day, and slept sitting up. In 1948 he went to Hong Kong, where he established the Buddhist Lecture Hall and other Way-places. In 1962 he brought the Proper Dharma to the West, lecturing on several dozen Mahayana Sutras in the United States. Over the years, the Master established more than twenty monasteries of Proper Dharma under the auspices of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association and the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. He also founded centers for the translation of the Buddhist canon and for education to spread the influence of the Dharma in the East and West. The Master manifested the stillness in the United States in 1995. Through his lifelong, selfless dedication to teaching living beings with wisdom and compassion, he influenced countless people to change their faults and to walk upon the pure, bright path to enlightenment.

Dharma Propagation, Buddhist Text Translation, and Education

The Venerable Master Hua's three great vows after leaving the home-life were (1) to propagate the Dharma, (2) to translate the Buddhist Canon, and (3) to promote education. In order to make these vows a reality, the Venerable Master based himself on the Three Principles and the Six Guidelines. Courageously facing every hardship, he founded monasteries, schools, and centers in the West, drawing in living beings and teaching them on a vast scale. Over the years, he founded the following institutions:

The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas and Its Branches

In propagating the Proper Dharma, the Venerable Master not only trained people but also founded Way-places where the Dharma wheel could turn and living beings could be saved. He wanted to provide cultivators with pure places to practice in accord with the Buddha's regulations. Over the years, he founded many Way-places of Proper Dharma. In the United States and Canada, these include the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas; Gold Mountain Monastery; Gold Sage Monastery; Gold Wheel Monastery; Gold Summit Monastery; Gold Buddha Monastery; Avatamsaka Monastery; Long Beach Monastery; the City of the Dharma Realm; Berkeley Buddhist Monastery; Avatamsaka Hermitage; and Blessings, Prosperity, and Longevity Monastery. In Taiwan, there are the Dharma Realm Buddhist Books Distribution Association, Dharma Realm Monastery, and Amitabha Monastery. In Malaysia, there are Zi Yun Dong Monastery, Deng Bi An Monastery, and Lotus Vihara. In Hong Kong, there are the Buddhist Lecture Hall and Cixing Monastery.

Purchased in 1974, the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is the hub of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association. The City is located in Talmage, Mendocino County, California, 110 miles north of San Francisco. Eighty of the 488 acres of land are in active use. The remaining acreage consists of meadows, orchards, and woods. With over seventy large buildings containing over 2,000 rooms, blessed with serenity and fresh, clean air, it is the first large Buddhist monastic community in the United States. It is also an international center for the Proper Dharma.

Although the Venerable Master Hua was the Ninth Patriarch in the Weiyang Sect of the Chan School, the monasteries he founded emphasize all of the five main practices of Mahayana Buddhism (Chan meditation, Pure Land,

esoteric, Vinaya (moral discipline), and doctrinal studies). This accords with the Buddha's words: "The Dharma is level and equal, with no high or low." At the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, the rules of purity are rigorously observed. Residents of the City strive to regulate their own conduct and to cultivate with vigor. Taking refuge in the Proper Dharma, they lead pure and selfless lives, and attain peace in body and mind. The Sutras are expounded and the Dharma wheel is turned daily. Residents dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to making Buddhism flourish. Monks and nuns in all the monasteries take one meal a day, always wear their precept sash, and follow the Three Principles:

Freezing, we do not scheme.
Starving, we do not beg.
Dying of poverty, we ask for nothing.
According with conditions, we do not change.
Not changing, we accord with conditions.
We adhere firmly to our three great principles.
We renounce our lives to do the Buddha's work.
We take the responsibility to mold our own destinies.
We rectify our lives to fulfill the Sanghan's role.
Encountering specific matters,
    we understand the principles.
Understanding the principles,
    we apply them in specific matters.
We carry on the single pulse of
    the Patriarchs' mind-transmission.

The monasteries also follow the Six Guidelines: not contending, not being greedy, not seeking, not being selfish, not pursuing personal advantage, and not lying.

International Translation Institute

The Venerable Master vowed to translate the Buddhist Canon (Tripitaka) into Western languages so that it would be widely accessible throughout the world. In 1973, he founded the International Translation Institute on Washington Street in San Francisco for the purpose of translating Buddhist scriptures into English and other languages. In 1977, the Institute was merged into Dharma Realm Buddhist University as the Institute for the Translation of Buddhist Texts. In 1991, the Venerable Master purchased a large building in

Burlingame (south of San Francisco) and established the International Translation Institute there for the purpose of translating and publishing Buddhist texts. To date, in addition to publishing over one hundred volumes of Buddhist texts in Chinese, the Association has published more than one hundred volumes of English, French, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Japanese translations of Buddhist texts, as well as bilingual (Chinese and English) editions. Audio and video tapes also continue to be produced. The monthly journal Vajra Bodhi Sea, which has been in circulation for nearly thirty years, has been published in bilingual (Chinese and English) format in recent years.

In the past, the difficult and vast mission of translating the Buddhist canon in China was sponsored and supported by the emperors and kings themselves. In our time, the Venerable Master encouraged his disciples to cooperatively shoulder this heavy responsibility, producing books and audio tapes and using the medium of language to turn the wheel of Proper Dharma and do the great work of the Buddha. All those who aspire to devote themselves to this work of sages should uphold the Eight Guidelines of the International Translation Institute:

1. One must free oneself from the motives of personal fame and profit.
2. One must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.
3. One must refrain from aggrandizing one's work and denigrating that of others.
4. One must not establish oneself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with one's fault-finding.
5. One must take the Buddha-mind as one's own mind.
6. One must use the wisdom of Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles.
7. One must request Virtuous Elders of the ten directions to certify one's translations.
8. One must endeavor to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

These are the Venerable Master's vows, and participants in the work of translation should strive to realize them.

Instilling Goodness Elementary School, Developing Virtue Secondary School, Dharma Realm Buddhist University

"Education is the best national defense." The Venerable Master Hua saw clearly that in order to save the world, it is essential to promote good education. If we want to save the world, we have to bring about a complete change in people's minds and guide them to cast out unwholesomeness and to pursue goodness. To this end the Master founded Instilling Goodness Elementary School in 1974, and Developing Virtue Secondary School and Dharma Realm Buddhist University in 1976.

In an education embodying the spirit of Buddhism, the elementary school teaches students to be filial to parents, the secondary school teaches students to be good citizens, and the university teaches such virtues as humaneness and righteousness. Instilling Goodness Elementary School and Developing Virtue Secondary School combine the best of contemporary and traditional methods and of Western and Eastern cultures. They emphasize moral virtue and spiritual development, and aim to guide students to become good and capable citizens who will benefit humankind. The schools offer a bilingual (Chinese/English) program where boys and girls study separately. In addition to standard academic courses, the curriculum includes ethics, meditation, Buddhist studies, and so on, giving students a foundation in virtue and guiding them to understand themselves and explore the truths of the universe. Branches of the schools (Sunday schools) have been established at branch monasteries with the aim of propagating filial piety and ethical education.

Dharma Realm Buddhist University, whose curriculum focuses on the Proper Dharma, does not merely transmit academic knowledge. It emphasizes a foundation in virtue, which expands into the study of how to help all living beings discover their inherent nature. Thus, Dharma Realm Buddhist University advocates a spirit of shared inquiry and free exchange of ideas, encouraging students to study various canonical texts and use different experiences and learning styles to tap their inherent wisdom and fathom the meanings of those texts. Students are encouraged to practice the principles they have understood and apply the Buddhadharma in their lives, thereby nurturing their wisdom and virtue. The University aims to produce outstanding individuals of high moral character who will be able to bring benefit to all sentient beings.

Sangha and Laity Training Programs

In the Dharma-ending Age, in both Eastern and Western societies there are very few monasteries that actually practice the Buddha's regulations and strictly uphold the precepts. Teachers with genuine wisdom and understanding, capable of guiding those who aspire to pursue careers in Buddhism, are very rare. The Venerable Master founded the Sangha and Laity Training Programs in 1982 with the goals of raising the caliber of the Sangha, perpetuating the Proper Dharma, providing professional training for Buddhists around the world on both practical and theoretical levels, and transmitting the wisdom of the Buddha.

The Sangha Training Program gives monastics a solid foundation in Buddhist studies and practice, training them in the practical affairs of Buddhism and Sangha management. After graduation, students will be able to assume various responsibilities related to Buddhism in monasteries, institutions, and other settings. The program emphasizes a thorough knowledge of Buddhism, under-standing of the scriptures, earnest cultivation, strict observance of precepts, and the development of a virtuous character, so that students will be able to propagate the Proper Dharma and perpetuate the Buddha's wisdom. The Laity Training Program offers courses to help laypeople develop correct views, study and practice the teachings, and understand monastic regulations and ceremonies, so that they will be able to contribute their abilities in Buddhist organizations.

Let Us Go Forward Together

In this Dharma-ending Age when the world is becoming increasingly dangerous and evil, the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, in consonance with its guiding principles, opens the doors of its monasteries and centers to those of all religions and nationalities. Anyone who is devoted to humaneness, righteousness, virtue, and the pursuit of truth, and who wishes to understand him or herself and help humankind, is welcome to come study and practice with us. May we together bring benefit and happiness to all living beings.

Dharma Realm Buddhist Association Branches

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Verse of Transference

May the merit and virtue accrued from this work,
Adorn the Buddha's Pure Lands,
Repaying four kinds of kindness above,
And aiding those suffering in the paths below.

May those who see and hear of this,
All bring forth the resolve for Bodhi,
And when this retribution body is over,
Be born together in ultimate bliss.

Dharma Protector Wei T’o Bodhisattva

The Shurangama Sutra

The Shurangama Sutra

Volume Five

a simple explanation by the

Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

English translation by the
Buddhist Text Translation Society

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The Shurangama Sutra - Volume Five

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Introduction

This is the fifth of eight volumes of the *Shurangama Sutra*, with commentaries from the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua.

In the previous volume, the Buddha demonstrated that the source of ignorance lies with the six organs: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. In "The Six Knots", the Buddha shows how these six 'knots' actually originate from the same source. The Buddha also shows that they must be untied in sequence, one after another.

In the "Twenty-five Means to Enlightenment", the Buddha then enquires of those in the assembly which 'knot' allowed them entry to perfect penetration. There were twenty-five responses:

In "The Six Defiling Objects", Ajnatakaundinya, Upanishad, Adorned Fragrance, Physician King, Bhadrapala and Kashyapa speak of the objects of sound, form, smell, taste, touch and dharmas.

In the "Five Organs", Aniruddha, Kshudrapanthaka, Gavampati, Pilindavatsa, and Born-into-Emptiness speak of the eye, nose, tongue, body and mind organs.

In "The Six Consciousnesses", Shariputra, Universal Worthy, Sundarananda, Purnamaitreyaniputra, Upali and Mahamaudgalyayana speak of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind consciousnesses.

In “The Seven Elements”, Ucchushma, Maintaining-the-Ground Bodhisattva, Moonlight Bodhisattva, Vaidurya Bodhisattva, Treasury-of-Emptiness Bodhisattva, Maitreya Bodhisattva and Great-Strength Bodhisattva speak of the elements fire, earth, water, wind, emptiness, consciousness and perception.

In “The Ear Organ”, Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva speaks of his entry into perfect penetration via the ear organ. He also speaks of how, via the thiry-two response bodies, the fourteen fearlessnesses and the four inconceivables, he has benefitted and will continue to benefit living beings of the past, present and the future.

In “Manjushri Selects the Organ of Entry”, the Buddha requests Manjushri to select the best organ of entry so that Ananda may quickly attain enlightenment, and so that living beings of the present and future may easily cultivate and enter the Bodhisattva vehicle, seeking the unsurpassed Way.

Manjushri then, for the sake of Ananda and livings beings of the future, selects the most suitable of the twenty-five modes of entry and praises its efficaciousness.

User's Guide

to the Shurangama Sutra series

Because of the length of the *Shurangama Sutra*, and the need to provide aid to various readers, the Sutra has been compiled into a series of 9 books: the "Sutra Text and Suppliments", and the remaining Volumes one to eight.

The "Sutra Text and Suppliments" contains:

1. the entire Sutra text, which is in excess of 2700 paragraphs;
2. the entire outline, which contains 1676 entries;
3. and a master index, which has index references for both the "Sutra Text and Suppliments" and the eight volumes.

Volumes one to eight contain:

1. the Sutra text, with commentaries;
2. the local outline entries;
3. and a local index.

Readers who wish to read or recite the Sutra in its entirety will find the "Sutra Text and Suppliments" very useful.

Those who wish to deeply study the Sutra with its commentaries will find volumes one to eight indispensable.

Exhortation to Protect and Propagate

by Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua

Within Buddhism, there are very many important sutras. However, the most important Sutra is the *Shurangama Sutra*. If there are places which have the *Shurangama Sutra*, then the Proper Dharma dwells in the world. If there is no *Shurangama Sutra*, then the Dharma Ending Age appears. Therefore, we Buddhist disciples, each and every one, must bring our strength, must bring our blood, and must bring our sweat to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*. In the *Sutra of the Ultimate Extinction of the Dharma*, it says very, very clearly that in the Dharma Ending Age, the *Shurangama Sutra* is the first to disappear, and the rest of the sutras disappear after it. If the *Shurangama Sutra* does not disappear, then the Proper Dharma Age is present. Because of that, we Buddhist disciples must use our lives to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*, must use vows and resolution to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*, and cause the *Shurangama Sutra* to be known far and wide, reaching every nook and cranny, reaching into each and every dust-mote, reaching out to the exhaustion of empty space and of the Dharma Realm. If we can do that, then there will be a time of Proper Dharma radiating great light.

Why would the *Shurangama Sutra* be destroyed? It is because it is too true. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's true body. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's sharira. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's true and actual stupa and shrine. Therefore, because

the *Shurangama Sutra* is so true, all the demon kings use all kinds of methods to destroy the *Shurangama Sutra*. They begin by starting rumors, saying that the *Shurangama Sutra* is phony. Why do they say the *Shurangama Sutra* is phony? It is because the *Shurangama Sutra* speaks too truly, especially in the sections on The Four Decisive Deeds, the Twenty-five Sages Describing Perfect Penetration, and the States of the Fifty Skandha Demons. Those of off-center persuasions and externally-oriented ways, weird demons and strange freaks, are unable to stand it. Consequently there are a good many senseless people who claim that the *Shurangama Sutra* is a forgery.

Now, the principles set forth in the *Shurangama Sutra* are on the one hand proper, and on the other in accord with principle, and the weird demons and strange freaks, those in various cults and sects, all cannot hide away their forms. Most senseless people, in particular unwise scholars and garbage-collecting professors "Tread upon the holy writ." With their extremely scant and partial understanding, they are confused and unclear, lacking real erudition and true and actual wisdom. That is why they falsely criticize. We who study the Buddhadharma should very deeply be aware of these circumstances. Therefore, wherever we go, we should bring up the *Shurangama Sutra*. Wherever we go, we should propagate the *Shurangama Sutra*. Wherever we go, we should introduce the *Shurangama Sutra* to people. Why is that? It is because we wish to cause the Proper Dharma long to dwell in the world.

If the *Shurangama Sutra* is regarded as true, then there is no problem. To verify its truth, let me say that if the *Shurangama Sutra* were phony, then I would willingly fall into the hells forever through all eternity—for being unable to recognize the Buddhadharma—for mistaking the false for true. If the *Shurangama Sutra* is true, then life after life in every time I make the vow to propagate the Great Dharma of the Shurangama, that I shall in every time and every place propagate the true principles of the Shurangama.

Everyone should pay attention to the following point. How could the *Shurangama Sutra* not have been spoken by the Buddha? No one else could have spoken the *Shurangama Sutra*. And so I hope that all those people who make senseless accusations will wake up fast and stop creating the causes for suffering in the Hell of Pulling Out Tongues. No matter who the scholar is, no matter what country students of the Buddhadharma are from, all should quickly mend their ways, admit their mistakes, and manage to change. There is no greater good than that. I can then say that all who look at the *Shurangama Sutra*, all who listen to the *Shurangama Sutra*, and all who investigate the *Shurangama Sutra*, will very quickly accomplish Buddhahood.

Composed by Gold Mountain Shramana Tripitaka Master Hua
Translated by Bhikshuni Heng Hsien
Reviewed by Shramanerika Heng Wen

The Eight Guidelines

of the Buddhist Text Translation Society

1. A volunteer must free him/herself from the motives of personal fame and profit.
2. A volunteer must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.
3. A volunteer must refrain from aggrandizing his/her work and denigrating that of others.
4. A volunteer must not establish him/herself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with his or her fault-finding.
5. A volunteer must take the Buddha-mind as his/her own mind.
6. A volunteer must use the wisdom of Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles.
7. A volunteer must request Virtuous Elders in the ten directions to certify his/her translations.
8. A volunteer must endeavour to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

Outline

of the Shurangama Sutra

The outline for the Shurangama Sutra was compiled by Dharma Master Yuan Ying, which categorizes the various parts of the Sutra text consisting of over 2,700 paragraphs to 1,676 entries.

These entries are presented in the form of a tree-like structure, dividing the various parts of the Sutra text into groups, those groupings being sub-divided further and further, thus providing a detailed break-down of the entire text.

Though the outline is not a prerequisite to reading the Sutra text and the accompanying commentaries, it serves as a useful tool for students of the Way who wish to deeply study the Sutra. Without this outline, students may find it difficult to refer to specific parts of the text.

Because of the size of the outline (and the Sutra), only outline entries which pertain to the Sutra text contained within this book is included.

For the outline of the entire Sutra, please refer to the “Sutra Text and Suppliments”, where the entire sutra text, outline, and index entries are all combined into one single volume.

Outline of Shurangama Sutra - Volume Five

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釋迦牟尼文佛

Namo Original Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha

Verse for Opening a Sutra

The unsurpassed, profound, and wonderful Dharma,
Is difficult to encounter in hundreds of millions of eons,
I now see and hear it, receive and uphold it,
And I vow to fathom the Tathagata's true meaning.

CHAPTER 1

The Six Knots

I3 The Buddha ties a strip of cloth to explain the principle.
J1 Ananda explains his question and asks for instruction.

Sutra:

Ananda put his palms together, bowed, and said to the Buddha, "Having heard the Buddha's unbounded, greatly compassionate, pure, everlasting, true and actual expression of dharma, I still have not understood the sequence for releasing the knots such that when the six are untied, the one is gone also. I only hope you will be compassionate, and once again take pity on this assembly and on those of the future, by bestowing the sounds of Dharma on us and wash and rinse away our heavy defilements."

Commentary:

Ananda put his palms together, bowed, and said to the Buddha, "having heard the Buddha's unbounded, greatly compassionate, pure, everlasting, true and actual expression of dharma, I still have not understood the principle whereby **when the six are untied, the one is gone also.** I haven't yet figured out **the sequence for releasing the knots. I only hope you will be compassionate, and once again take pity on this assembly,** all

the people gathered here, **and on those of the future** great assemblies of beings. Take pity by **bestowing the sounds of Dharma on us.** Make a gift to all living beings of the expression of the Buddhadharma, to **wash and rinse away our heavy defilements."** Just as with vegetables: first you wash them, and then, fearing they might not be completely clean, you rinse them again. "Defilements" may be "heavy" or "serious" enough to cause us to fall into lower states of being. The defilements refer to our greed, hatred, and stupidity. Ananda seeks further clarification.

J2 The Thus Come One's clever explanation.
K1 He cleverly sets up an analogy.
L1 The original cloth is one strip.

Sutra:

Then, upon the lion's throne, the Thus Come One straightened his 'Nirvana robes,' arranged his samghati, took hold of the table made of the seven gems, reached out onto the table with his hand and picked up a flowered cloth given him by the Suyama God.

Commentary:

Then, upon the lion's throne, the Thus Come One – the Dharma seat that Shakyamuni Buddha was sitting on was called a "Lion's Throne." It was so named to indicate that the Buddha's speaking of Dharma was like the roar of a lion; When the lion roars, all other beasts tremble. When the Buddha speaks Dharma, the heavenly demons and those outside the Way are frightened. **He straightened his 'Nirvana robes' –** "Nirvana robes" refers to the Buddha's inner clothing – and **arranged his samghati**. The "Samghati" is the outer sash, the "perfect robe" or "great robe." He **took hold of the table made of the seven gems.** The table placed before the Buddha was made of gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, mother-of-pearl, red pearls, and carnelian. Lapis lazuli is sometimes described as "thick crystal." Crystal may not seem so special in this day and age when glass is so prevalent, but in these early times, crystal was hard to come by, so it was considered a

precious gem. Mother-of-pearl sometimes has a pattern like cart-tracks in it. Carnelian is likened to "horse-brains" in its shape; it is red and white in color.

He then **reached out onto the table with his hand and picked up a flowered cloth given him by the Suyama God.** Suyama Heaven is the heaven of "well-divided time." "Flowered cloth" refers to a long hand-towel made of layered flowers. In India, such towels were valued highly, and this one was especially so, since it was a gift to Shakyamuni Buddha from the Ruling God of the Suyama Heaven.

L2 He ties it in six knots.

Sutra:

Then, as the assembly watched, he tied it into a knot and showed it to Ananda, asking, "What is this called?"

Ananda and the great assembly answered together, "It's called a knot."

Then the Thus Come One tied another knot in the cloth of layered flowers and asked Ananda again, "What is this called?"

Ananda and the great assembly once again answered together, "It, too, is called a knot."

He continued in this pattern until he had tied six knots in the cloth of layered flowers. As he made each knot, he held it up to Ananda and asked, "What is this called?"

And each time Ananda and the great assembly answered the Buddha in the same way: "It is called a knot."

Commentary:

Then, as the assembly watched, he tied it into a knot. The Buddha, as if playing a game with children, took up the cloth of layered flowers and tied it in knots, while he was sitting there before the great assembly. He **showed it to Ananda, asking, "What is this called?"** He let Ananda see the knot and asked him what it was.

Ananda and the great assembly answered together, "It's called a knot.

Then the Thus Come One tied another knot in the cloth of layered flowers and asked Ananda again, "What is this called?" He asked him the same thing over again.

Ananda and the great assembly once again answered together, "It, too, is called a knot." They gave the same answer.

He continued in this pattern until he had tied six knots in the cloth of layered flowers. In all, he tied six knots in the towel. **As he made each knot, he held it up to Ananda and asked, "What is this called?"**

And each time Ananda and the great assembly answered the Buddha in the same way: "It is called a knot." The cloth of layered flowers represents the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. The six knots tied in it represent the six sense organs.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "When I first tied the cloth, you called it a knot. Since the cloth of layered flowers is basically a single strip, how can you call the second and third ties knots as well?"

Commentary:

The cloth is just one piece, which you said was a knot, so how can you call the second and third ties in it knots as well? The Buddha deliberately quizzed Ananda in this way.

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, this cloth of woven layered flowers is just one piece, but as I consider it, when the Thus Come One makes one tie, it is called a knot. If he were to make a hundred ties, they would be called a hundred knots, how much the more so with this cloth, which has exactly six knots, not seven or five. Why does the Thus

Come One allow me to call only the first tie a knot and not the second or third ties?"

Ananda said to the Buddha – Ananda replied to the Buddha's quizzing. **"World Honored One, this cloth of woven layered flowers is just one piece.** The precious cloth of layered flowers is a single strip, **but as I consider it, when the Thus Come One makes one tie, it is called a knot. If he were to make a hundred ties, they would be called a hundred knots.** Every one of those hundred can be called a knot, **how much the more so with this cloth, which has exactly six knots, not seven or five.** You have only tied six knots in this strip of cloth. You didn't go on to tie seven knots nor did you stop at five. **Why does the Thus Come One allow me to call only the first tie a knot and not the second or third ties?** Buddha, why do you only admit that the first tie is called a knot and don't recognize the second and the third as knots? What's the principle behind this?"

K2 He answers two questions.
L1 The answer that when the six are untied, the one is gone.
M1 By the analogy he shows that one starts with something that is the same and turns it into something different.

Sutra:

The Buddha told Ananda, "You know that this precious cloth of flowers is basically one strip, but when I made six ties in it, you said it had six knots. As you carefully consider this, you will see that the substance of the cloth is the same; it is the knots that make the difference.

Commentary:

The Buddha listened to Ananda's answer with amusement. Of course, the six were all called knots. It's not that the first is called a knot and the others are not. The Buddha asked him that question to tease him. And Ananda insisted that all six could be called knots. This was all for the sake of debate. It was a point of argument, a principle to discuss.

The Buddha told Ananda, "You know that this precious cloth of flowers is basically one strip. It's a single piece. **But when I made six ties in it, you said it had six knots.** You then called it six knots. **As you carefully consider this –** look into this in minute detail, reflect upon it **– you will see that the substance of the cloth is the same.** It doesn't have so many names. **It is the knots that make the difference.** As soon as I added a knot, it became different.

This demonstrates that the Nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One is basically one; the six sense organs are knots tied in it. But, although there are six knots, the original substance of the Treasury is still one. If you untie the six knots, not even one will remain.

Sutra:

"What do you think? The first knot I tied was called number one. Continuing until I come to the sixth knot, and as I now tie it, is it also number one?"

Commentary:

"**What do you think?** Ananda, what is your opinion? **The first knot I tied was called number one. Continuing until I come to the sixth knot, and as I now tie it, is it also number one?** Can the sixth one in turn be called number one?"

Sutra:

"No, World Honored One. If there are six knots, the sixth knot can never be called number one. In all my lives of learning, with all my understanding, how could I now confuse the names of six knots?"

Commentary:

Ananda said, "Absolutely not. You can't switch them. Number one is number one. You can't change number one so that it is called number six or change number six so that it is called number one. **No, World Honored One. If there are six knots, the sixth knot can never be called number one.** If there are six, the sixth is just

the sixth, and no matter what, it cannot turn into the first. **In all my lives of learning,** I, Ananda, the learned one, from limitless kalpas past down to the present, **with all my understanding –** what I have studied, what I have made my specialty, is to be well-read and good at debate. When I call upon all my accumulated learning and use all my skill in debate, **how could I now confuse the names of six knots?** How could I mix up the names? How could I fail to keep them in order?"

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "So it is. The six knots are not the same. Consider their origin. They are created from the one cloth. To confuse their order will not do.

Commentary:

The Buddha said, "So it is. What you say is right. You can't change their names. You can't call the sixth one the first. The first one cannot be changed and called the sixth. You are absolutely right. The reason they cannot be interchanged is because **the six knots are not the same. Consider their origin. They are created from the one cloth. To confuse their order will not do.** If you mix up the numerical order of the knots, it won't work, you say. That's right.

Sutra:

"Your six sense organs are also like this. In the midst or ultimate sameness, conclusive differences arise."

Commentary:

Originally they are identical, but the eyes function as eyes, the ears function as ears, the nose functions as a nose, the tongue functions as a tongue, the body functions as a body, and the mind functions as the mind. Originally they were one and the same, but at this point they divide. Even then, it would be fine, if they worked together. They could all return their light and illumine within. The eyes could turn their light inward, the ears could listen within and hear the self-nature, the nose would not be turned by smells, the

tongue would not be turned by tastes, the body would not be turned by objects of touch, and the mind would not be influenced by dharmas. If they could all work together and return the light, they would still be one. But they can't work together. The eyes see forms, the nose smells fragrances and is turned by them, the tongue tastes flavors and is turned by them, the body enjoys objects of touch and is turned by them, and the mind is influenced by dharmas and is turned by them. What's important is to not follow after them, but ordinary people are unable to avoid following after them.

M2 By the analogy he shows that if one gets rid of what is different, one can return to what is the same.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "You certainly dislike these six knots and would like there to be just one cloth. But how can that be done?"

Ananda said, "As long as these knots remain, there will be grounds for argument about what is and what is not. Their very existence will lead to such distinctions as this knot not being that knot and that knot not being this one. But if on this day, the Thus Come One unties them all, so that no knots remain, then there will be no 'this' and no 'that.' There will not even be something called 'one.' How much the less can there be six?"

The Buddha said, "'When the six are untied, the one is gone' is the same meaning.

Commentary:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "You certainly dislike these six knots. It's for sure you don't like the six knots," says Shakyamuni Buddha to his disciple, "You would like to untie the six knots so they cease to be, **and would like there to be just one cloth.** You want to make one out of them. **But how can that be done?** How can you get back to the one – to that basic substance?"

Ananda heard the Buddha's question and **said, "As long as these knots remain, there will be grounds for argument about**

what is and what is not. Right?" Ananda admits, "I would like to get rid of the six knots and have only one thing remaining, because as long as the six are around, there will be disputes about them. The reason for contention is that there is distinction between this and that. **Their very existence will lead to such distinctions as this knot not being that knot and that knot not being this one.** In the midst of these various knots will arise arguments about what is right and what is wrong. 'This knot,' the first one, is not the sixth, and 'that knot,' the sixth one, is not the first. Distinctions arise regarding this and that.

But if on this day, the Thus Come One unties them all, so that no knots remain, then there will be no 'this' and no 'that.' There won't be a first, second, third, fourth, fifth, or sixth knot. **There will not even be something called 'one;'** if the six knots are destroyed there won't even be one knot. **How much the less can there be six?**

The Buddha said, "'When the six are untied, the one is gone' is the same meaning." "Not bad," the Buddha told Ananda, "You spoke that principle correctly. If you understand that principle, you can understand 'when the six are untied, the one is none; for that is the same meaning. Are you clear about it now?"

L2 The answer that untying the knots is done in sequence.
M1 He explains the sequence of the knots.
N1 He accords with sequence in tying the knots.

Sutra:

"Because from beginningless time your mind and nature have been made wild and rebellious, you have produced false knowledge and views. This falseness continues to arise without respite, and the wearisomeness of these views brings about objective 'dust.'

Commentary:

"Because from beginningless time your mind and nature have been made wild and rebellious:" From beginningless kalpas

on down to the present, your pure mind and your basic nature of True Suchness – your self-nature – have been made wild. "Wild" refers to your "appearance-of-production" ignorance, which is innate. From the "appearance-of-production" ignorance comes the discriminatory knowledge of dharmas which is also innate. "Wild" refers to ignorance.

"Rebellious" refers to the Three Subtle Appearances discussed before. They are:

1. The appearance of karma.
2. The appearance of turning.
3. The appearance of manifestation.

The appearance of karma brings about the appearance of turning, which leads to the appearance of manifestation. This is very subtle, however, not something which ordinary people can discern.

One unenlightened thought produces Three Subtle Appearances. With the existence of these three appearances, the first knot is tied. The point at which **"you have produced false knowledge and views"** is when,

> *The experience of states becomes the condition*
> *from which Six Coarse Appearances arise.*

These have already been discussed. They are:

1. The appearance of knowing. This knowing refers to worldly knowledge and skill in debate. It includes science, technology, and all kinds of professions. Because you have "produced false knowledge and views," you give rise to the appearance of knowing. **"This falseness continues to arise without respite,"** and brings about the second of the six coarse appearances,

2. The appearance of continuity. It never stops. The appearance of knowing is the second knot, and the appearance of continuity is the third knot.

3. The appearance of grasping. You give rise to attachments.
4. The appearance of assigning names.
5. The appearance of the production of karma.
6. The appearance of karmic-bound suffering.

These four represent the last three knots.

N2 He uses an analogy to explain further.

Sutra:

“It is just like strange flowers appearing when your eyes grow weary of staring. They arise at random without any cause within the tranquil, essential brightness.

Commentary:

“It is just like strange flowers appearing when your eyes grow weary of staring.” This is like the passage earlier in the Sutra: “He stares into emptiness and after a long time gets weary.” When he gets weary, he sees strange flowers in emptiness. So, too, here: **They arise at random without any cause within the tranquil, essential brightness.** For no reason at all, they appear haphazardly in the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

N3 To oppose the sequence is connected with the analogy.

Sutra:

“Everything in the world – the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth, as well as birth, death, and Nirvana – is all just a strange weariness: the upside-down appearance of flowers.”

Commentary:

“It is not only the Three Subtle and Six Coarse Appearances that arise because the eyes grow weary from long staring, so that they begin to see the appearance of flowers in emptiness. **Everything in the world –** the entire universe, that is, not just our world, but all worlds throughout empty space and the Dharmarealm **– the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth, as well as birth, death, and Nirvana – is all just a strange weariness.** They all

exist because the eyes, as it were, have stared for a long time and become weary. They all come about through the same kind of circumstances as the eyes' staring. They are **the upside-down appearance of flowers.** Originally there were no flowers in space. All these things are like the upside-down appearance of flowers." So the Buddha's principle here is: "Do you know where everything in the world came from? Everything arises from living beings' ignorance. That one unenlightened thought produces the Three Subtle Appearances. Experiencing states becomes the conditions from which Six Coarse Appearances arise."

M2 He shows that the untying is done in sequence.
N1 First he teaches him the technique of untying.
O1 Ananda seeks to untie the knot of weariness.

Sutra:

Ananda said, "This weariness is the same as the knots. How do we untie them?"

Commentary:

Having heard the Buddha's explanation, Ananda said, **"This weariness is the same as the knots.** This fatigue which comes from overexertion, is the same as the knots. **How do we untie them?** How do we get rid of them? How can we make them go away, so that we can return to our original face? How can we get back to our inherent nature of the Treasury of the Thus Cone One?"

O2 The Thus Come One uses a clever analogy to show them.

Sutra:

The Thus Come One took hold of the knotted cloth and pulled on its left end and asked Ananda, "Is this the way to untie it?"

"No, World Honored One."

Then with his hand he pulled on the right end and again asked Ananda, "Is this the way to untie it?"

"No, World Honored One."

Commentary:

The Thus Come One uses an analogy to cause Ananda to understand for himself how to untie the knots, which are identical with the weariness that comes from overexertion.

The Thus Come One took hold of the knotted cloth and pulled on its left end. He took up the jeweled embroidered cloth which he had knotted and pulled its end to the left. At the same time he **asked Ananda, "Is this the way to untie it?"** Is this how you get it undone?"

Ananda answered, **"No, World Honored One."**

Then with his hand he pulled on the right end and again asked Ananda, "Is this the way to untie it?" Can I get the knots undone this way? Have the knots loosened now?

"**No, World Honored One,** they haven't come loose. If you just pull on them, they won't come untied," Ananda replied.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "Now I have pulled it to the left and right with my hand and still have not been able to undo them. What method do you propose for untying them?"

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, you must untie the knots from their center. Then they will come undone."

Commentary:

Ananda is so intelligent: The Buddha couldn't do it, but Ananda thought of a way. **The Buddha said to Ananda, "Now I have pulled it to the left and right with my hand and still have not been able to undo them.** I haven't untied even one of the knots. I can't do it. **What method do you propose for untying them?** You think of a way. Use some clever expedient. How can we get them undone? You're very smart, Ananda. You will certainly come up with a method."

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, you must untie the knots from their center. Then they will come undone. If you just pull to the left or to the right, you can't get them undone. What you have to do is work on the heart of the knot. Once you loosen that, the knot will come undone."

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "So it is, so it is, if you want to get them undone, you have to untie them from the center.

Commentary:

The Buddha's reply is, "You are truly intelligent, Ananda. Aren't you? **So it is, so it is.** That's what you do. You figured it out. I couldn't think of how to do it, and you came up with this wonderful method!" He expresses his approval. "Right, correct. Now I understand. **If you want to get them undone, you have to untie them from the center.** So, you aren't just well-educated, you're fundamentally intelligent."

O3 He tells him that he should not erroneously accept or believe what was spoken.

Sutra:

"Ananda, the Buddhadharma I explain arises from causes and conditions. But that is not to grasp at the mixing and uniting of coarse appearances in the world. The Thus Come One understands all worldly and world-transcending dharmas and knows their fundamental causes and what conditions bring them into being.

Commentary:

"Ananda, the Buddhadharma I explain arises from causes and conditions. But that is not to grasp at the mixing and uniting of coarse appearances in the world. It's not that I'm referring to the coarse appearances that anyone can see. I, **the Thus Come One understands all worldly and world-transcending dharmas."** "Worldly dharmas" refers to the defiled and defiling dharmas in the six common realms of rebirth. "World-transcending

dharmas" refers to the pure dharmas found in the four sagely Dharmarealms. I know **their fundamental causes and what conditions bring them into being.** I know the basic source of these dharmas and how they accord with conditions.

Sutra:

"This is so to the extent that I know how many drops of rain fall in as many worlds away from here as there are dust motes in the Ganges. The same is true for all the things you can see: why the pine is straight, why the brambles are twisted, why the goose is white, why the crow is black – I understand the reasons.

Commentary:

"**This is so –** I know what conditions bring things about **– to the extent that I know how many drops of rain fall in as many worlds away from here as there are dust motes in the Ganges.** I know what the conditions are in worlds infinitely far away and in all the worlds in between. There's nothing in this world that I do not comprehend, and even in worlds vast distances beyond this world, I know exactly how much rain has fallen." The *Vajra Sutra* says,

> *The Thus Come One completely knows and sees*
> *All the thoughts in the minds of all living beings.*

It doesn't matter whether the beings are human or not; whatever thoughts go on in their minds are known to the Buddha. "**The same is true for all the things you can see.** You can't see things in as many worlds away from here as there are sand grains in the Ganges, but as to the things that are right now before your very eyes – **Why the pine is straight, why the brambles are twisted, why the goose is white, why the crow is black – I understand the reasons.**"

O4 If he selects an organ and unties the knot, then he will certainly be certified.

Sutra:

"Therefore, Ananda, you can select whichever one of the six sense-organs you wish. If the knots of the sense-organs are

removed, then the defiling appearances disappear of themselves. All falseness ceases to be. If that is not the true, what do you expect in addition to it?

Commentary:

"**Therefore –** because of the Buddha's total comprehension, as he has just explained **– Ananda, you can select whichever one of the six sense-organs you wish.** You yourself can choose whichever sense-organ you prefer. Do you remember how I explained the various merits of the sense-organs to you, how some have all twelve-hundred merits and some do not? Based on that, you can pick whichever one you want. Once you pick the organ, and **if the knots of the sense-organs are removed, then the defiling appearances disappear of themselves.** You apply the method to whichever organ you select in your cultivation, until the organ, the knots, and the defiling objects are all done away with. **All falseness ceases to be.** Then, all false thinking – thoughts based on production and extinction – all discriminations disappear."

"What happens then?" you wonder. "What do we do when all our false thoughts are gone?" "**If that is not the true, what do you expect in addition to it?** If you're not true then, what will you have left? All that's left is the true. When the false is gone, the true is total. Get rid of your mind that seizes on conditions, and the nature of wonderful True Suchness appears, the pure and fundamental mind, the original face of the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One."

At this point in the sutra, you should be particularly attentive. You should develop your skill by working on one of the six sense-organs. Which one? Any one will do: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind – you can apply your skill to any one of them. The entrance to any of the six sense-organs is the Way. All are a part of the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. All you have to do is take one in hand and put your mind to it in your cultivation, and you can return to the basic substance of the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

N2 Then he shows that the untying is done in sequence.
O1 He first questions him to lead him to awakening.

Sutra:

"Ananda, I now ask you, can the six knots in the cloth of layered flowers be untied simultaneously and released all at once?"

"No, World Honored One. The knots were originally made one at a time, now they must be untied one at a time. The substance of the six knots is the same, but they were not made simultaneously, and so now when it is time to release them, how can they be untied simultaneously?"

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha says, "**Ananda, I now ask you, can the six knots in the cloth of layered flowers be untied simultaneously and released all at once?** This cloth from the Heaven of Well-Divided Time has six knots in it, as everyone can see. Can these knots be untied all at the same time?"

"No, World Honored One," Ananda replied. "Why not? **The knots were originally made one at a time** They were tied in sequence. **Now they must be untied one at a time.** They have to be untied in sequence. **The substance of the six knots is the same, but they were not made simultaneously.** Although the six knots are all tied in the same cloth, they were not tied all at the same time, **and so now when it is time to release them, how can they be untied simultaneously?** They have to be released one at a time.

O2 He uses that awakening to further unite with understanding.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "Releasing the six sense-organs is the same way. When the sense-organ begins to be released, one realizes the emptiness of people first. When the nature of that emptiness is fully understood, then one is released from

dharmas. Once one is freed from dharmas, neither kind of emptiness will arise.

Commentary:

The Buddha said, "Releasing the six sense-organs is the same way. The principle is the same as the principle for untying the six knots. You release the sense-organs one by one; you can't work on them all at once. **When the sense-organ begins to be released –** that is, the organ you have chosen to cultivate to perfect penetration **– one realizes the emptiness of people first."** With the emptiness of people, there is no attachment to self. There are two kinds of attachment to self:

1) Innate attachment to self.
2) Differentiated attachment to self.

At this point, both these attachments are finished.

When the nature of that emptiness is fully understood – when the emptiness of people is fully perfected **– then one is released from dharmas.** Then dharmas are also empty. One is liberated from the two kinds of attachments to dharmas:

1) Innate attachment to dharmas.
2) Differentiated attachment to dharmas.

"Once one is freed from dharmas, neither kind of emptiness will arise." Once you attain liberation from dharmas, there is no longer any emptiness of people or emptiness of dharmas. Neither of these kinds of emptiness arises.

Sutra:

"This is called the Patience with Non-Production attained by the Bodhisattvas by means of samadhi."

Commentary:

"This is called the Patience with Non-Production attained by the Bodhisattvas by means of samadhi." The Bodhisattvas attain the power of concentration, and thus can awaken to patience

with the non-production of dharmas, which is the state of a Bodhisattva.

CHAPTER 2

Twenty-five Means to Enlightenment

I4 The profound transmission of selecting the organ.
J1 Ananda traces his enlightenment and makes grateful obeisance.

Sutra:

Upon receiving the Buddha's instruction, Ananda and the great assembly gained wisdom and awareness that was perfectly penetrating and free of doubt and delusion.

Commentary:

Upon receiving the Buddha's instruction, Ananda and the great assembly gained wisdom and awareness that was perfectly penetrating. At that time their wisdom was complete and bright and their enlightenment reached perfect penetration. And they were **free of doubt and delusion.**

Sutra:

All at the same time, they placed their palms together, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and he said to the Buddha, "Today our bodies and minds are illumined, and we are happily free from obstruction.

Commentary:

All at the same time, they placed their palms together, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and he said to the Buddha – they made a full prostration at his feet and Ananda said, **"Today our bodies and minds are illumined."** They clearly understood. "**And we are happily free from obstruction.** We have attained a blissful state free of hindrance, doubt, and obstacles."

J2 He asks for instruction in the perfect penetration of the organ.
K1 He has not yet penetrated the organ.

Sutra:

"We have understood the meaning of the ending of the six and the one. Still, we have not yet gone through to fundamental, perfect penetration.

Commentary:

"**We have understood the meaning of the ending of the six and the one.** and the one. We see clearly the principle that when the six are free, the one also is gone. **Still, we have not yet gone through to fundamental, perfect penetration.** What is the source of perfect penetration? We still don't know."

K2 He is fortunate to meet the Thus Come One.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, we who have floated and floundered our way through aeon after aeon, homeless and orphaned, had no idea, we never imagined that we could meet with the Buddha in such a close relationship. We are like lost infants who have suddenly found their compassionate mother.

Commentary:

"**World Honored One, we** Sound-Hearers with something left to study, **who have floated and floundered our way,** bobbing and sinking in the bitter sea of birth and death, and failing to get out of the wheel of rebirth, **through aeon after aeon, homeless and orphaned –** without parents to take care of them, orphans often

have no roof over their heads and must sleep out in the open at night. "We **had no idea, we never imagined that we could meet with the Buddha in such a close relationship.** It never occurred to us that we could encounter the Buddha, who is like a compassionate mother to us. **We are like lost infants who have suddenly found their compassionate mother.**" The child that was lost now finds its mother and will have milk to drink.

Sutra:

"Because of this, we accomplished the way in this assembly. Yet, the secret words which we received are the same as our basic enlightenment, and so it is the same as if we hadn't even heard them.

Commentary:

"Because of this, opportunity which we have had, because of the Dharma the Buddha spoke, **we accomplished the way in this assembly. Yet, the secret words which we received are the same as our basic enlightenment.** The secret Dharmas which the Buddha taught us were such that each of us were enlightened to different things, and yet the enlightenment is our own, **and so it is the same as if we hadn't even heard them."** Ananda says, "The Dharma the Buddha speaks causes us to become enlightened. The Dharma was what the Buddha spoke, but the enlightenment is our own.

We understand our basic nature,
We see our basic mind.

It is not something that is obtained from outside. That's why it's no different than if we hadn't heard at all."

K3 He hopes the Buddha will make the profound transmission.

Sutra:

"We only wish the greatly compassionate one will bestow upon us the profound secret as the Thus Come One's final instruction." After saying this he prostrated himself, withdrew,

and held himself ready for the secret opportunity as he awaited the Buddha's hidden transmission.

Commentary:

Ananda continued to beseech the Buddha. **"We only wish the greatly compassionate one will bestow upon us the profound secret as the Thus Come One's final instruction."** He asks the Buddha to again give rise to great compassion and bestow on him the profound secret Dharma – the Great Shurangama Samadhi. He wants the water of samadhi. "As the Thus Come One's final instruction. Let this be the ultimate instruction the Buddha gives us." Once he had made this request, **he prostrated himself, withdrew, and held himself ready for the secret opportunity.** He returned to his seat and waited for Shakyamuni Buddha to transmit the wonderful Dharma to him secretly. "Secret" means that although everyone is present, the Buddha transmits a Dharma-door to Ananda without the others realizing it. So the text says, **"as he awaited the Buddha's hidden transmission."**

J3 The Buddha instructs all the sages to speak.
K1 The Buddha asks all the sages.

Sutra:

Then the World Honored One told all those in the assembly who were great Bodhisattvas and great Arhats, their outflows extinguished – "All of you Bodhisattvas and Arhats who are born from within my dharma and have attained the stage beyond study, I now ask you: When you first brought forth your resolve and became enlightened to the eighteen realms, which one of these brought perfect penetration? Through which expedient did you enter samadhi?"

Commentary:

The Buddha knew that Ananda had withdrawn and readied himself for the secret opportunity to receive the Buddha's silent transmission. The Buddha knew what was on Ananda's mind, but for the time being he did not respond to Ananda's request. First he

questioned the twenty-five sages. He asked who had obtained perfect penetration and where they had obtained it from. He asked them which sense-organ they used to become enlightened. **Then the World Honored One told all those in the assembly who were great Bodhisattvas and great Arhats, their outflows extinguished –** this sentence was added as narrative when the Sutra was compiled. What follows is the Buddha's words. "**All of you Bodhisattvas and Arhats who are born from within my dharma and have attained the stage beyond study –** you were

Born from the Buddha's mouth,
Transformationally born from the Dharma.

You have reached the fourth fruition of Arhatship, the level beyond study, or you are great Bodhisattvas. **I now ask you: When you first brought forth your resolve and became enlightened to the eighteen realms, which one of these brought perfect penetration?** In the end, which sense-organ, which realm, was perfectly penetrating? **Through which expedient did you enter samadhi?** Through which Dharma-door did you attain samadhi?"

The Six Defiling Objects

K2 The assembly tells their former cases.
L1 The sages speak in general.
M1 Perfect penetration through the six defiling objects.
N1 Ajnatakaundinya: the object of sound.

Sutra:

Kaundinya, with the others of the five Bhikshus, arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "When I was in the Deer Park and the Pheasant Garden, I observed the Thus Come One immediately after his accomplishment of the Way. Upon hearing the Buddha's voice, I understood the Four Truths.

Commentary:

Kaundinya, also known as Ajnatakaundinya, was one of the Buddha's disciples. His name means "Understanding the Original Limit" (解本際); "The Very First to Understand" (最初解). He was the first of the Buddha's disciples to become enlightened. He was a Dharma-Nature Elder, because his enlightenment came early and he was quite old by this time. **With the others of the five Bhikshus,** he **arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "When I was in the Deer Park and the Pheasant Garden, I observed the Thus Come One immediately after his accomplishment of the Way."** It's said that the Pheasant Garden was a grove of trees where a lot of pheasants lived. The

grove once caught fire, and the pheasants wetted down their wings with water and beat out the fire. So it's said that this spot was a very efficacious one. There was an unusually magical atmosphere about the place. The geomantic properties were excellent. People who cultivate the Way should find places to abide that are endowed with such an efficacious atmosphere, because it's said of such places:

When people draw near,
It's magical for them.

In other words, it's easier to get enlightened there.

"At that time," Kaundinya continued, "We observed the Thus Come One right after he had been certified to the Way. At first,

He sat beneath the Bodhi Tree,
Saw one night a brilliant star,
And awakened to the Way.

Then he came to the Deer Park to meet us five bhikshus. **Upon hearing the Buddha's voice –** the sound of the Dharma he spoke – we awakened to the Way. **I understood the Four Truths."** The Buddha turned the Dharma Wheel of the Four Truths three times. He said, "This is suffering; its nature is oppressive. This is origination; its nature is seductive," The origination of afflictions is seductive. "This is extinction; its nature is that it can be certified to. This is the Way; its nature is that it can be cultivated."

Next he said, "This is suffering; you should know it. This is origination; you should cut it off. This is extinction; you should certify to it. This is the Way; you should cultivate it."

On the third turning he said, "This is suffering; I already know it. This is origination; I have already severed it. This is extinction; I have already certified to it. This is the Way; I have already cultivated it."

After the Buddha finished these turnings, Kaundinya became enlightened. Earlier in the *Shurangama Sutra*, Kaundinya has

explained that he awakened because of the two words, “guest dust.” He understood that the guest was not the host. The host does not go, while the guest does.

He heard the Buddha’s voice and awakened to the Way. People’s voices are a very important part of them. Your voice should be resonant. If your voice is full and carries well, people will enjoy listening when you speak dharma. If your voice is unclear and you hesitate and stammer when you speak, then people will not like listening to you. The Buddha’s voice was crystal clear like a lion’s roar. No matter how many people were assembled, they could all hear him, and they all understood his meaning. Nor was it only people who understood; all the animals also understood the dharma the Buddha spoke. So it is said,

With a single sound he spoke the Dharma.
All beings understood, each according to their kind.

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks us Bhikshus to speak. I was the first to understand, and the Thus Come One certified me and named me Ajnata. His wonderful sound was both secret and all-pervasive. It was through sound that I became an Arhat.

Commentary:

“The Buddha asks us Bhikshus to speak. Buddha, you have now asked all the bhikshus how they attained perfect penetration. **I was the first to understand, and the Thus Come One certified me and named me Ajnata.** I was the first to become enlightened and obtain liberation. **His wonderful sound was both secret and all-pervasive.** I heard the Buddha’s subtle, wonderful sound, and it tallied with my self-nature. It was both intimate and perfectly pervading. It fused perfectly with my self-nature. **It was through sound that I became an Arhat.** I cultivated through sound and became enlightened.”

Gwan Yin Bodhisattva cultivated the perfect penetration of the ear-organ. After the twenty-five sages each discuss their perfect

penetration, Manjushri Bodhisattva selects the ear as the best sense-organ for Ananda to use to obtain perfect penetration. He says cultivation of the ear-organ is the most appropriate dharma.

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, sound is the superior means."

Commentary:

"**The Buddha asks about perfect penetration.** The Buddha asks which of the Eighteen Realms was the one through which I obtained perfect penetration. **As I have been certified to it, sound is the superior means.** My enlightenment came through sound. It was in that way that I obtained the fruition of Arhatship. So I think sound is the most important. It is the best method to use for cultivation."

N2 Upanishad: the object of form.

Sutra:

Upanishad arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I also saw the Buddha when he first accomplished the way. I learned to contemplate the appearance of impurity until I grew to loathe it and came to understand that the nature of all form is unclean. Bare bones and subtle dust all return to emptiness, and so both emptiness and form are done away with. With this realization, I accomplished the Path Beyond Study.

Commentary:

Upanishad's name means "the emptiness of the nature of form" (色性空). He'd always been plagued with strong sexual desire. Because of it, the Buddha taught him to cultivate the Contemplation of Impurity. This means that he observed how his own physical body, as well as everyone else's, was unclean. The specific practice is called Contemplating the Nine Aspects of Impurity.

1. Contemplate swelling. After death, the body starts to swell up.
2. Contemplate the green mottled flesh. After the ‘swelling, the body breaks out in green areas like big bruises.
3. Contemplate flesh broken open. After it turns green, it pops open.
4. Contemplate blood and filth. When it breaks open, the blood and other things flow out.
5. Contemplate pus and rot. The pus begins to ooze out of the body as it starts to rot.
6. Contemplate it being eaten by worms. Out of the pus and rot emerge worms which feast on the flesh.
7. Contemplate it scattering. The flesh begins to fall off.
8. Contemplate the bare bones. Once the flesh is gone, there are just the bones underneath.
9. Contemplate it being burned. It is burned by the fire and turns into ashes. The ashes drift into emptiness and turn into dust, until at last there’s nothing left.

Upanishad was very attached to forms. He would take special notice of every woman he saw to remark on how beautiful this one was, how exquisite that one was, and how attractive another was. He put all his efforts into this kind of thing.

After he met the Buddha, the Buddha taught him to cultivate the Contemplation of Nine Aspects of Impurity.

Upanishad **arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “I also saw the Buddha when he first accomplished the way. I learned to contemplate the appearance of impurity until I grew to loathe it.** I, too, was with the Buddha just after he accomplished the Way, and the Buddha taught me to cultivate the Contemplation of Nine Aspects of Impurity. From this I realized that no matter how beautiful a person may be while alive, no matter how attractive or how exquisite she is, so that the more you think about her the more enticing she becomes, nevertheless,

once she dies, she will swell up just as grotesquely as anyone else. She'll get just as green and mottled, and her flesh will break open. Could you love her then? Then the blood and filth oozes out, and the corpse starts to stink. Dogs like it at this stage, but people stay far away from it. Then the pus and rot forms. Just thinking about it makes you want to vomit! It would be impossible to kiss her by this time. Then the worms grow: big ones and little ones. The flies and blueflies come in swarms. They draw near to her and at that point you wouldn't even get jealous. The flesh scatters and the bare bones are all that remain. Then it's burned and the entire thing disappears. Tell me, where has that beautiful person gone? Through this contemplation he grew to loathe forms, **"and came to understand that the nature of all form is unclean."** He realized that no matter how beautiful the form was, its source was impure. The father's semen and the mother's blood is an unclean origin. **"Bare bones and subtle dust all return to emptiness, and so both emptiness and form are done away with. With this realization, I accomplished the Path Beyond Study,"** that is, the fourth fruition of Arhatship.

Sutra:

"The Thus Come One certified me and named me Upanishad. The object of form came to an end, and wonderful form was both secret and all-pervasive. Thus, it was through the appearance of form that I became an Arhat. The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, form is the superior means."

Commentary:

"The Thus Come One certified me and named me Upanishad. The Buddha sealed and certified me and named me 'The emptiness of the nature of form.' I saw through form; it was empty in its nature and just disappeared, and so I got rid of my attachment. **The object of form came to an end.** Since my unclean form no longer existed, **wonderful form was both secret and all-pervasive.** In True Emptiness it turned into Subtle Wonderful

Form. **It was through the appearance of form that I became an Arhat,** that I awakened to the Way. I was one who used to be fond of sex, but I got beyond it; I transcended it. **The Buddha asks about perfect penetration.** The Buddha wants to know which of the Eighteen Realms is perfectly penetrating. **As I have been certified to it, form is the superior means.** I awakened to the Way through the object of form. I saw through the object of form and was certified to the fruition."

N3 Adorned Fragrance: the object of smells.

Sutra:

The Pure Youth, Adorned with Fragrance, arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I heard the Thus Come One teach me to contemplate attentively all conditioned appearances.

Commentary:

The Pure Youth, Adorned with Fragrance, was adorned with a fragrant light. "Pure Youth" does not mean that he was a child – a person so young he didn't understand anything at all. "Pure Youth" means he entered the Way as a virgin youth. He was a virgin when he left home. He never married. After Upanishad finished explaining his causes and conditions, the Pure Youth, Adorned with Fragrance, **arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I heard the Thus Come One teach me to contemplate attentively all conditioned appearances.** The Buddha told me to look into all conditioned dharmas in minute detail.

Sutra:

"After I heard the Buddha's instruction, I sat in repose in the quiet of a pure dwelling. When I saw the bhikshus light sinking incense, the fragrant scent quietly entered my nostrils. I contemplated this fragrance: it did not come from the wood; it did not come from emptiness; it did not come from the smoke, and it did not come from the fire. There was no place it came

from and no place it went to. Because of this, my discriminating mind was dispelled, and I attained the absence of outflows.

Commentary:

"**After I heard the Buddha's instruction, I sat in repose in the quiet of a pure dwelling.** The Buddha told me to look into conditioned appearances, and I went off to cultivate and develop my skill." A "pure dwelling" refers to a place where people are vegetarian and the environment is tranquil. He uses this expression to praise the Buddha. "When I was in my pure dwelling cultivating, **I saw the bhikshus light sinking incense.**" "Sinking incense" is called agaru in Sanskrit. This fragrant wood sinks when placed in water, and from this it takes its name.

"The fragrant scent quietly entered my nostrils. I contemplated this fragrance: it did not come from the wood; it did not come from emptiness. I contemplated the source of the fragrances: it was not the wood. If it came from the wood alone, there would be no need to burn it in order for it to emit fragrance. If it came from emptiness, it should be ever-present. But it must be lit for the fragrance to rise; before it is lit, there is no pervasive fragrance. The fragrance also does **not come from the smoke.** Nor does it **come from the fire. There was no place it came from and no place it went to. Because of this, my discriminating mind was dispelled, and I attained the absence of outflows.** Because I contemplated in this way, my mind subject to production and extinction disappeared. I was certified to the fruition of no-outflows.

Sutra:

"The Thus Come One certified me and called me 'Adorned with Fragrance.' Defiling scent suddenly vanished, and wonderful fragrance was both secret and all pervasive. It was through the adornment of fragrance that I became an Arhat.

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, the adornment of fragrance is the superior means."

The Thus Come One certified me and called me 'Adorned with Fragrance.' Defiling scent suddenly vanished, and wonderful fragrance was both secret and all pervasive. It was through the adornment of fragrance that I became an Arhat.

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. He wants to know which sense-organ is perfectly penetrating. **As I have been certified to it –** reckoning it from my point of view – **the adornment of fragrance is the superior means."**

N4 Physician King: the object of taste.

Sutra:

The two Dharma-Princes, Physician King and Superior Physician, and five hundred Brahma gods in the assembly arose from their seats, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "From beginningless kalpas until now, we have been good doctors for the world. In our mouths we have tasted many herbs, wood, metals, and stones of the Saha world, a hundred and eight thousand flavors. We know in detail the bitter, sour, salty, bland, sweet, and pungent flavors, and the like, in all their combinations and inherent changes. We have a thorough knowledge of whether they be cooling or warming, poisonous or non-poisonous.

Commentary:

The Pure Youth, Adorned with Fragrance, awakened to the Way through the sense-object of fragrance. Upanishad awakened to the Way through the sense-object of form. Kaundinya awakened to the Way through the sense-object of sound. These two Bodhisattvas, Physician King and Superior Physician, awakened to the Way through the sense-object of flavor.

Physician King and Superior Physician Bodhisattva were brothers. In the past, Physician King Bodhisattva made a vow to be a good doctor for the world, so that all who came to see him would be cured of their illness, no matter what the sickness was. He made this vow at the time of the Buddha called Vaidurya Light, before the

Bhikshu Sun Treasury, in whose Dharma Assembly was an elder named Constellation Light. His brother made a similar vow at the same time. Similarly, in China, there was Emperor Shen Neng who tasted the hundred herbs and developed the science of herbal medicine. His stomach was like glass, and he could see whether what he had eaten was poisonous or not. Unfortunately, people in modern China totally fail to comprehend such historical events as this. They say such things are merely legends – superstitions. Actually, this is a commonplace occurrence, documented in Chinese medicinal texts. But modern Chinese students don't read the classics, and so they don't understand such things. Having read these texts myself, I am convinced that Emperor Shen Neng was a reincarnation of Physician King Bodhisattva, who came to China to help found the study of medicine there.

The two Dharma-Princes, Physician King and Superior Physician, and five hundred Brahma gods in the assembly arose from their seats. The Buddha is the Dharma King, so another name for Bodhisattva is Dharma Prince.

These two Bodhisattvas and their retinue of five hundred gods arose from their seats, **bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "From beginningless kalpas until now, we have been good doctors for the world. In our mouths we have tasted many herbs, wood, metals, and stones of the Saha world, a hundred and eight thousand flavors."** At that time in India, the nature of medicines was composed of these four elements – herbs, wood, metals, and stones. **We know in detail the bitter, sour, salty, bland, sweet, and pungent flavors, and the like, in all their combinations and inherent changes.** We know which medicines are compatible and which ones are not. Those which are compatible can cure illnesses when mixed in appropriate combinations. Those which are not compatible, but are in opposition to one another, can kill people if taken in combination. So it says in the *Yan Hsing Fu* ("Treatise on the Nature of Medicines"), "Of the basic herbs, there are eighteen that act in opposition and nineteen flavors. *Fan lo*, *bei lyan*, and *gung wu*." That refers to *fan hsia*, *kua lo*, *bei lyan*, and

wu tou, which are in opposition to one another. "Licorice roots do not combine with *k'ai tsao*, *ba chi*, *gan tsui*, or *lyan hua*." Licorice root is described as a predominately compatible herb in the *Treatise on the Nature of Medicines*. It can act as a base for many combinations. But it is not compatible with *k'ai tsao*, *ba chi*, *gan tsui*, or *lyan hua*. If someone takes it in combination with these, he might die. *Li lu* and *hsi hsing* together will also kill if taken together. *Hsi hsin* taken by itself cures headaches. **We have a thorough knowledge** of how these herbs are compatible or incompatible and which ones have changes inherent in them which will occur if they are used in combination with the wrong herbs, as well as **"whether they be cooling or warming, poisonous or non-poisonous."** They can be cold, hot, neutral, or warm. Some people whose natures are cool to begin with can't take cooling medicines, and people with warm natures are unable to stand a warming medicine. The two Bodhisattvas also knew how much poison was contained in any given herb.

Sutra:

"While serving the Thus Come One we came to know that the nature of flavors is not empty and is not existent, nor is it the body or mind, nor is it apart from body and mind. We became enlightened by discriminating among flavors.

Commentary:

"While serving the Thus Come One, we reverently paid homage and made offerings to the Buddha. **We came to know that the nature of flavors is not empty and is not existent.** Flavors don't come from emptiness, nor do they come from existence. **Nor is it the body or mind, nor is it apart from body and mind.** The nature of flavor does not arise from the tongue's tasting flavors; nor do flavors exist apart from the tongue's tasting them. **We became enlightened by discriminating among flavors.** We contemplated in minute detail the source of flavors and from this became enlightened. When we had made discriminations to the ultimate point – to the point where there could be no further discrimination

– we became enlightened. We became aware that originally flavor is flavorless!

Sutra:

"The Thus Come One sealed and certified us brothers and named us as Bodhisattvas Physician King and Superior Physician. Now in the assembly we are Dharma Princes who have ascended to the Bodhisattva level because we became enlightened by means of flavors.

Commentary:

"The Thus Come One sealed and certified us brothers and named us as Bodhisattvas Physician King and Superior Physician. The Buddha gave us Bodhisattvas these two names. **Now in the assembly we are Dharma Princes who have ascended to the Bodhisattva level because we became enlightened by means of flavors.** We tasted flavors until we became enlightened and reached the level of a Bodhisattva.

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As we have been certified to it, the cause of flavors is the superior means."

Commentary:

Flavors are the best for eating. They are the most flavorful and also the least flavorful. The least flavorful is the most supreme, wonderful flavor. But you'll have to taste it for yourself to find out whether or not it is flavorful.

N5 Bhadrapala: the object of touch.

Sutra:

Bhadrapala and sixteen awakened lords who were his companions, arose from their seats and bowed at the Buddha's feet. He said to the Buddha:

Commentary:

The name **Bhadrapala** is Sanskrit and means “worthy guard” (*xian shou* 賢守) and also “worthy protector” (*xian de* 賢德) When Bhadrapala a first began to practice the Way, he was very arrogant. There was once a Bodhisattva named “Never Slighting” who concentrated on the practice of being respectful to people. He bowed to whomever he met, and then said, “I don’t want to slight you, because in the future you will all become Buddhas.” When he did this to the arrogant Bhadrapala, Bhadrapala scolded him: “You low-down idiot,” he said, “how can you be so cheap? You’re worthless:” And after that encounter, he even urged people to go beat up Never Slighting Bodhisattva. When Never Slighting would bow to these people, they would kick him while he was prostrate. Sometimes they gave him nosebleeds, sometimes they knocked his teeth out. From this display of arrogance, Bhadrapala fell into the hells. He remained there for a very long time before he again became a person. **Bhadrapala and sixteen awakened lords who were his companions –** “Awakened Lords” refers to Bodhisattvas **– arose from their seats and bowed at the Buddha’s feet. He said to the Buddha:**

Sutra:

“We first heard the dharma and left the home-life under King of Awesome Sound Buddha. Once, when it was time for the Sangha to bathe, I followed the custom and entered the bathhouse. Suddenly I awakened to the fact that water does not wash away the dust, nor does it cleanse the body. At that point, between the two, I became peaceful, and I attained the state of there being nothing at all.

Commentary:

“We first heard the dharma and left the home-life under King of Awesome Sound Buddha.” King of Awesome Sound Buddha was the first of all the Buddhas. If anyone asks you who the first Buddha was, you now know what to tell them. Bhadrapala left the home life under that Buddha. **Once, when it was time for the**

Sangha to bathe, I followed the custom and entered the bathhouse.” Left-home people bathed every fortnight. That was the rule at the time. **“Suddenly I awakened to the fact that water does not wash away the dust, nor does it cleanse the body.”** It was because of water that he became enlightened. He was awakened through the object of touch. **“At that point, between the two, I became peaceful.”** How is it water doesn’t wash the dust? How does it not wash the body? That’s the wonderful point. If you don’t understand, investigate Ch’an. Look into this and you, too, can awaken through the object of touch. Between water not being able to wash the dust and not being able to cleanse the body, he experienced tranquility. He **“attained the state of there being nothing at all.”** That means there was no object of touch.

Sutra:

“To this day, I have never forgotten that past experience. Having left home with the Buddha, I have gone beyond study. That Buddha named me Bhadrapala. Wonderful touch was revealed, and I accomplished the position of the Buddha’s disciple.

Commentary:

“To this day, I have never forgotten that past experience.” I’ve never forgotten how I was aware of the water when I entered the bathhouse that time.” Although Bhadrapala went through the hells after that, he still never forgot his awakening. From the time of the Buddha King of Awesome Sound, to the time when Bhadrapala spoke these words in Shakyamuni Buddha’s assembly is a period beyond reckoning. Never Slighting Bodhisattva was just Shakyamuni Buddha in a former life. And Bhadrapala, now in Shakyamuni Buddha’s assembly, was the person who in a previous incarnation slandered and had others beat and oppress Never Slighting Bodhisattva. He was that bhikshu who was so arrogant and full of self-pride that he fell into the hells. **“Having left home with the Buddha, I have gone beyond study. That Buddha named me Bhadrapala.”** He says, “Now I have left the home life

and gone beyond study. That Buddha who enabled me to go beyond study named me Bhadrapala. **Wonderful touch was revealed, and I accomplished the position of the Buddha's disciple.** The object of touch disappeared, but a wonderful object of touch was revealed." When he says he's a "disciple of the Buddha," he means he has been certified to the position of Bodhisattva.

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, touch is the superior means."

Commentary:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, touch, the object of touch, **is the superior means."**

N6 Kashyapa: the object of dharmas.

Sutra:

Mahakashyapa, Purple-golden Light Bhikshuni, and others arose from their seats, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha:

Commentary:

Mahakashyapa: "Maha" means great; "Kashyapa" was his name. Since there were many people with the last name Kashyapa, the word "great" was added to indicate who was being referred to. Kashyapa means "Great Turtle Clan (*da gui shi* 大龜氏)." His ancestors had seen a huge turtle with a map on its back and took their name from this incident. Mahakashyapa is also known as "drinker of light (*da yin guang* 大飲光)." The light of his body seemed to swallow up all other kinds of light, because they disappeared in the brilliance of his light.

His personal name was Pippala, which is the name of a tree. His parents had no son, and they prayed for one to a pippala tree; as a result they had a son, whom they named in the tree's honor. Mahakashyapa was a fire worshipper. He cultivated the skill of smelting fire. There were all kinds of outside religions in India.

Water worshippers, fire worshippers, and earth worshippers. The latter would bury themselves in the earth and if they remained alive for a certain number of days, they could become spirits. These outside religions were confused and confusing.

Purple-golden Light Bhikshuni, who was Mahakashyapa's wife. At the time of Shakyamuni Buddha, Mahakashyapa was 120 years old, and his wife was probably close to one hundred. Long ago, at the time of Kashyapa Buddha, his wife saw a Buddha-image being battered by wind and rain, to the point that there was no gold left on the figure. She resolved to repair the temple, but didn't have enough money. She also hoped to regild the image, but that was even more expensive. However, where there's a will, there's a way, and this woman's heart was strong and true. Everywhere she went she begged for money, and over a period of years she accumulated the equivalent of about 100,000 American dollars. Then she hired a goldsmith to regild the image. The goldsmith was moved by her decision to repair the Buddha image despite her own poverty, and he offered to do the work for half the wage. So the two of them shared the merit and virtue of this. Soon the temple was repaired so that it didn't leak anymore, and the Buddha image was regilded. After that in every life, this woman 5 body shone with a purple-golden light. After the goldsmith, who was Mahakashyapa in a former life, finished the Buddha image, something strange happened between him and the woman. "Your heart is very good," he said to her. "I'll take you for my wife, and I will be your husband. Not just in this life, but from now on, in every life, we will marry one another." That's why I guessed that since Mahakashyapa was 120, his wife must have been at least a hundred. Even so, they were still very strong and active in their cultivation. Mahakashyapa's wife cultivated the Way and was certified to the fruition.

And others in his retinue **arose from their seats, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha.**

Sutra:

"In a past kalpa in this region, I drew near to the Buddha named Sun-Moon-Lamp, who was then in the world. I heard dharma from him and cultivated and studied with him. After that Buddha's extinction, I made offerings to his sharira and lit lamps to continue his light. Purple-Golden Light gilded the Buddha's image. From that time on, in life after life, my body has always been perfect and has shone with a purple-golden light. The Bhikshuni, Purple-Golden Light, and others make up my retinue, and we all brought forth the resolve for Bodhi at the same time.

Commentary:

We should all remember the important point: their relationship of husband and wife in life after life was not based on emotional love. Rather, they married in every life and then cultivated together. They investigated Ch'an and sat in meditation. In life after life, they did the Buddha's work. They studied the Buddhadharma and cultivated the Way. Now do you understand?

Mahakashyapa explains, **"In a past kalpa in this region, I drew near to the Buddha named Sun-Moon-Lamp, who was then in the world. I heard dharma from him and cultivated and studied with him."** A very, very long time ago, a Buddha named Sun-Moon-Lamp Buddha appeared in the world. The sun can illumine things in the daytime; the moon can light things at night; lamps can shine day and night. Daytime represents existence, and night represents emptiness. Thus it's both noumenon and phenomenon; phenomenon and noumenon. It's also neither noumenon and phenomenon; not phenomenon and not noumenon. That means it's not attached to emptiness or existence.

"After that Buddha's extinction, I made offerings to his sharira." The merit and virtue of making offerings to the Buddha's sharira is equal to that of making offerings to the Buddha himself. "I **lit lamps to continue his light**, so the Buddhadharma would expand and flourish. **Purple-Golden Light gilded the Buddha's**

image. From that time on, in life after life, my body has always been perfect and has shone with a purple-golden light.” Mahakashyapa’s appearance was very full and complete. And I’m sure his wife was also lovely. **“The Bhikshuni, Purple-Golden Light, and others make up my retinue, and we all brought forth the resolve for Bodhi at the same time.”** The important point was that they cultivated together. Their relationship was not based on emotional love.

Sutra:

“I contemplated that the world’s six sense-objects change and decay; they are but empty stillness. Based on this, I cultivated extinction. Now my body and mind can pass through hundreds of thousands of kalpas as though they were a finger-snap.

Commentary:

Mahakashyapa continues, **“I contemplated that the world’s six sense-objects change and decay.”** He is, basically, discussing objects of mind, but here he refers to the six sense-objects, because the objects of mind have no shape or appearance; they are the shadows of the first five sense objects. The objects of mind exist because of the first five sense-objects. If the first five did not exist, the objects of mind would not come to be, because they have no substance of their own. Forms, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas – these six objects – interact, change, and decay. “**They are but empty stillness.** Their very essence is empty. There isn’t anything there at all. **Based on this, I cultivated extinction.** I used the power of this contemplation,” says Mahakashyapa, “to cultivate the Samadhi of Extinction, which means I put an end to the sixth mind-consciousness and no longer dwelt in the discriminating mind. This is also known as the Samadhi of the Extinction of Feeling and Thought. **Now my body and mind can pass through hundreds of thousands of kalpas as though they were a finger-snap.”** His mind could endure through as long a period of time as hundreds of thousands of kalpas, as

though they were but an instant of time – the snap of a finger. Mahakashyapa is actually in samadhi now – in the Samadhi of Extinction – inside Chicken Foot Mountain in Yunnan Province in China.

Sutra:

"Based on the emptiness of Dharmas, I accomplished Arhatship. The World Honored One says that I am foremost in Dhuta practices. Wonderful dharma brought me awakening and understanding, and I extinguished all outflows. The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, dharmas are the superior means."

Commentary:

Mahakashyapa says, **"Based on the emptiness of Dharmas, I accomplished Arhatship. The World Honored One says that I am foremost in Dhuta practices."** Dhuta is a Sanskrit word; it means "ascetic" (*dou sou* 抖擻). It means to strike up your spirits and go forward with vigor; to work hard and not be lax. There are twelve Dhuta practices:

1. Wearing rag robes;
2. possessing only three robes;
3. begging for food;
4. consecutive begging;
5. eating only one meal a day;
6. eating a fixed and moderate amount of food;
7. not drinking juices after noon;
B. dwelling in an Aranya (a quiet place);
9. dwelling beneath a tree;
10. dwelling in the open;
11. dwelling in a graveyard;
12. always sitting and never lying down.

"Wonderful dharma brought me awakening and understanding, and I extinguished all outflows. The Buddha asks

about perfect penetration. Buddha, you are asking each of us about the cause and conditions regarding perfect penetration – our initial resolve which brought about our certification. **As I have been certified to it, dharmas are the superior means.** The sense-object of dharmas, this cause, is the best means.”

Five Organs

M2 Perfect penetration through the five organs.
N1 Aniruddha: the eye organ.

Sutra:

Aniruddha arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "When I first left home, I was fond of sleeping all the time. The Thus Come One scolded me and said I was no better than an animal. When I heard the Buddha's scolding, I wept and upbraided myself. For seven days I did not sleep, and I lost the sight in both my eyes.

Commentary:

Aniruddha means "Never Poor" (*wu pin* 無貧) and "According to your wish" (*ru yi* 如意) He **arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "When I first left home, I was fond of sleeping all the time. The Thus Come One scolded me and said I was no better than an animal."** Shakyamuni Buddha spoke this way to him:

> *Hey! Hey! How can you sleep,*
> *Like an oyster or a clam?*
> *Sleep, sleep for a thousand years,*
> *But you'll never hear the Buddha's name.*

When the Buddha said that to him, he became repentant. **"When I heard the Buddha's scolding, I wept and upbraided myself."** How can you be so gutless?' I asked myself. 'Why do you like to sleep all day long? All right for you, I'm going to forbid you to sleep!' **For seven days** and nights **I did not sleep."** He probably walked around and sat alternately to keep himself from falling asleep, **"And I lost the sight in both my eyes."** The eyes will work during the day, but they need to rest at night. If you don't let them rest and they get too tired, they just quit working. They go on strike. So Aniruddha couldn't see a thing.

Sutra:

"The World Honored One taught me the Vajra Samadhi of the Delightful Seeing, which illumines and is bright. Although I had no eyes, I could contemplate the ten directions with true and penetrating clarity, just as if I were looking at a piece of fruit in the palm of my hand. The Thus Come One certified me as having attained Arhatship.

Commentary:

"**The World Honored One** took pity on me because I was blind and taught me a certain method. It was called **the Vajra Samadhi of the Delightful Seeing, which illumines and is bright.** I cultivated this samadhi for a long time, and I obtained a Heavenly Eye which covered half my head (*ban tou tian yan* 半頭天眼). **Although I had no eyes –** although I didn't use the ordinary flesh eyes to look at things, with this Heavenly Eye – **I could contemplate** all the places in the **ten directions with true and penetrating clarity, just as if I were looking at a piece of fruit in the palm of my hand.** It was like seeing an Amala fruit in my hand. The Thus Come One certified me as having attained Arhatship.

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, returning the seeing back to its source is the foremost method."

Commentary:

"**The Buddha asks** the Bodhisattvas and disciples **about** the **perfect penetration** that they have obtained. **As I have been certified to it, returning the seeing back to its source is the foremost method.** As I, Aniruddha, have learned, you turn the seeing around and bring it back to your own original nature to cultivate it. This is the best Dharma-door."

N2 Kshudrapanthaka: the nose organ.

Sutra:

Kshudrapanthaka arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha:

Commentary:

Kshudra means "Born on the Way." The custom in India was that after a woman married and was about to give birth, she would return to her mother's home to have the child. In Kshudra's case, his mother, who should have really gone back a month or two in advance, waited until the last minute to return. The distance between her home and her mother's was considerable – probably about one or two hundred miles. Since she had waited until she was of full term, she only got half way there when her labor started, and she gave birth right then and there by the side of the road. That's how Kshudra got his name. His younger brother, Kshudrapanthaka, got his name the same way. **Panthaka** means "Born in the Same Fashion." In Kshudrapanthaka's case, the mother again waited too long and gave birth en route. So he was Kshudra's brother, Panthaka.

Kshudrapanthaka was extremely stupid. When one leaves the home life, the first thing one is given to learn is a short verse that is to be recited every morning. I recited one version earlier. This is another version:

Don't do evil with deeds of body, mouth, or mind;
Don't bother any living being in the world.

With proper thought, regard the desire-realm as empty;
And stay far away from non-beneficial practices.

When Kshudrapanthaka tried to learn this verse, he had the help of five-hundred Arhats, but after a hundred days of study, he hadn't learned one line of it. Pretty stupid, huh? He'd remember "deeds of body, mouth, and mind," but would forget "don't do evil." Or he'd remember "Don't do evil," but would forget "with deeds of body, mouth, and mind." I'm sure none of you are that stupid. When his brother, Kshudra, saw that five hundred Arhats had taught his brother for a hundred days and he still didn't know one line, he ordered him to return to lay-life. "Go find a wife and be done with it," he said and sent him on his way, refusing to allow him to stay and be a bhikshu.

Kshudrapanthaka thought, "I want to be a monk like all these people; what meaning is there in my returning to lay-life?" So he took a rope, went into the back gardens, and prepared to hang himself. Just as he was ready to do it, the Buddha manifested as a tree spirit and asked him, "What are you up to?"

"I'm not going to go on living."

"Not go on living? After you die, what then?"

"I don't know."

"Don't die," the tree spirit said. "Don't take your own life. There is a reason why you are stupid. You should strive to change your faults of the past. Once you change, everything will work out fine."

"What are the causes and effects from the past that make me so stupid now?" Kshudrapanthaka asked.

Remember that the tree spirit was a transformation of Shakyamuni Buddha; when Kshudrapanthaka asked that question, the Buddha appeared in his original Buddha-body and said, "In a past life you were a Tripitaka Master with five hundred disciples. Every day they wanted to study with you, but you did not teach them. You didn't lecture the Sutras or explain the Dharma, even if

people requested it. They might kneel before you for three days and nights and still you would not speak it for them. Because you would not explain the Dharma, you became stupid to the point that you don't understand a single sentence of Dharma."

Upon hearing that, Kshudrapanthaka was greatly ashamed "How could I have been like that?" That's what is called being stingy with the Dharma. You should all remember this. After I explain the Dharma for you, you should explain it wherever you go. Be sure not to harbor the attitude of "I'm not going to explain it for you: If you understand it, what will happen to me?" Don't be jealous of others' understanding of the Buddhadharma. The more jealous you become, the less you yourself will understand. Kshudrapanthaka had been stingy with the Dharma, so he was stupid. But because he still had good roots, too, he was born at the time of the Buddha.

Having told him of his past causes, the Buddha took up a broom and asked, "Do you know what this is?"

"It's a broom."

"Can you remember that?"

"Yes."

Then the Buddha instructed him, "Then just recite this way every day: just say, "broom," "broom," "broom" all day long. Kshudrapanthaka recited that for a few weeks. Then the Buddha stopped by to ask, "How are you doing? Can you remember that?'

"Yes, I remember it," replied Kshudrapanthaka.

"Fine," said the Buddha. "I'll just change the words a little to 'sweep clean.' Try reciting that now."

So he recited, "Sweep clean, sweep clean, sweep clean." And he used that invisible broom to sweep clean his own defilements. What he was doing was sweeping clean the defilement of his stinginess with the Dharma. Remember this. Take the principles that I am explaining to you in the *Shurangama Sutra* and explain them to others. If you do that, in future lives you will have

exceptional wisdom and intelligence. If you like to practice the giving of Dharma, you will never be stupid.

Sutra:

"I am deficient in the ability to memorize and do not have much innate intelligence. When I first met the Buddha, I heard the dharma and left the home-life. But, when I tried to remember one line of a verse by the Thus Come One, I went through a hundred days remembering the first part and forgetting the last, or remembering the last and forgetting the first.

Commentary:

"Born on the Way in the Same Fashion" tells of his experience now. "**I am deficient in the ability to memorize and do not have much innate intelligence.** Ananda never forgets anything that passes by his eyes. He is able to memorize things and is endowed with intelligence. But I, Panthaka am extremely stupid. **When I first met the Buddha, I heard the dharma and left the home-life.** Although I left home, **when I tried to remember one line of a verse by the Thus Come One –** The one line of verse was "Don't do evil deeds with body, mouth, or mind" **– I went through a hundred days remembering the first part and forgetting the last, or remembering the last and forgetting the first.** I would remember the first few words and forget the last ones. When I would remember the last words of the line, I forgot the first ones again. So in all that time I never mastered even one line of verse. That's how stupid I am."

Kshudrapanthaka was stupid because in past lives he refused to lecture the Sutras and speak Dharma for people. Wherever you go, then, you should make every effort to help others speak the Sutras and propagate the Dharma in order to teach and transform living beings. Take this as your personal responsibility. Don't be stingy with the Dharma!

I've already said this, but it bears repeating. Kshudrapanthaka had to undergo the retribution of being stupid because he could not

practice the giving of Dharma – he was stingy. My lecturing the Sutra now is the giving of Dharma. And why do I lecture for you? Because if I understand the Dharma and I do not explain it for you, in a future life I may not even come up to Kshudrapanthaka. He was unable to learn one sentence of verse in a hundred days; I might not be able to remember a single word in a whole year. That's why I don't charge money for lectures. I don't look for any kind of recompense on your part; I just lecture the Sutras and speak Dharma for you. I don't want to be stupid. If there are those of you who aren't afraid of being stupid, then just experiment. Go ahead and have the attitude, "I understand the Buddhadharma, but I'm not going to explain it to you." Try it out, and in the future, when you are more stupid than Kshudrapanthaka you'll know that what I say is true. You'll end up being the victim of the experiment. Ever since I first heard a Dharma Master say that if you don't practice the giving of Dharma you will end up stupid, I have never forgotten it.

That reminds me of a public record. Once there was an official, probably the equivalent of a mayor, who was very interested in the *Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra*. It was strange, however: of the seven scrolls of the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, he was extremely familiar with the first three and a half. He memorized those as soon as he read them. But as to the last three and a half scrolls, he couldn't remember them for anything, no matter how many times he read them. He couldn't understand why it was this way, so he asked a High Sanghan of the time, a Bright-Eyed Good Knowing Advisor who had opened all Five Eyes and had the Six Penetrations.

When the mayor was announced, the Elder Monk welcomed him and the official explained his problem. "Of all the Buddhist Sutras, it is the *Dharma Flower* which interests me. I like it best, but I can only memorize the first half of it. What's the reason?"

The Elder Monk said, "Oh, you want to know about that? Well, when I tell you, don't get upset or disbelieve."

"Fine," said the mayor, "I'll believe what you tell me."

So the Elder Monk explained, “The reason you are a mayor is that you created some merit in your past lives.

In the past you were an ox and you helped plow the fields at a temple. Since you made offerings to the Triple Jewel in this way, you amassed some merit. The reason you are only familiar with the first half of the *Dharma Flower Sutra* is as follows: It is the custom in temples to air the Sutra texts on the sixth day of the sixth lunar month. This keeps them from getting wormy. On that day, you approached the *Dharma Flower Sutra* and sniffed the first volume of the Sutra. But you only sniffed the first volume, not the second. That’s why you are so familiar with the first three and a half rolls of the Sutra in this life.”

The mayor bowed to the Elder Monk, and after that he was even more diligent in his investigation of the *Dharma Flower Sutra*.

An ox sniffed the Sutra and gained so much intelligence, whereas Kshudrapanthaka refused to give the Buddhadharma and became so stupid. If you compare these two incidents and reflect on them, it should be sufficient to keep you from experimenting. In fact, I hope you won’t experiment, because to sink to the level of Kshudrapanthaka would be a lot of suffering. On the other hand! we should not look down on Kshudrapanthaka. Although he was dull, he became enlightened after reciting “broom” and “sweep clean” for a short time. We may be smarter Kshudrapanthaka, but we haven’t become enlightened as quickly as he did. So in this respect we do not measure up to Kshudrapanthaka.

Sutra:

“The Buddha took pity on my stupidity and taught me to relax and regulate my breath. I contemplated my breath thoroughly to the subtle point in which arising, dwelling, change, and extinction happen in every kshana.

Commentary:

“**The Buddha took pity on my stupidity.** The Buddha felt sorry for me because I was utterly stupid, and he taught me to recite

'broom' and 'sweep clean.' He **taught me to relax and regulate my breath.**" This practice involves holding the in-breath for ten counts and then extending the out-breath for ten counts. No matter how stupid one is, one can probably count to ten! One inhalation and one exhalation is counted as one breath. **"I contemplated my breath thoroughly to the subtle point in which arising, dwelling, change, and extinction happen in every kshana."** In a breath, the point at which you begin to exhale is called the arising, and the sequence progresses through one continuous breath. The Tyan Tai School divides this contemplation into Six Wonderful Doors – six aspects of regulating the breath. We will not go into detail about them here, except to say that the beginning of the exhalation is called the arising, and continuing the breath is called dwelling. Change is when the breath is about to end, and extinction is when the breath is finished. This happens in every kshana. In the space of one thought there are ninety kshanas. In every kshana are nine hundred arisings and extinctions. These subtleties are not observable with the ordinary eyes.

Sutra:

"My mind suddenly attained vast non-obstruction, until my outflows were extinguished and I accomplished Arhatship. Beneath the Buddha's seat I was sealed and certified as being beyond study.

Commentary:

"At that time, I contemplated my breath until I reached a state of there being no self, no others, no living beings, and no lifespan. I Inhaled and exhaled effortlessly and my mind united into One. I had no discriminating thought and no thoughts that seized upon conditions. All thoughts stopped. **My mind suddenly attained vast non-obstruction.** 'Oh, I've returned to the origin and have gone back to the source!'" "Suddenly" here refers to enlightenment. It was like a door to a room suddenly being flung open. All the air in the room was immediately purified. There was no stale air left. Have you noticed that although there are a lot of people in this

lecture hall, the air remains pure? If you asked me why, I'd be hard put to tell you. Let's just say that in a Bodhimanda there is an inexpressibly wonderful purity to the atmosphere.

When you attend lectures on the Sutras, it is necessary to be extremely respectful. This is because the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will say, "You're a rotten egg: How can you come to the Way-place and act like that?" Everyone should be respectful and modest and have a harmonious regard for one another. Don't become self-satisfied or arrogant; don't say things like, "Look at how dumb you are: I'm so much smarter than you:" As soon as you have that thought, you start to become stupid yourself. Don't look down on others. The people in this Dharma Assembly are all my past parents; all are future Buddhas. If you slight these people, it's just like slighting the Buddha. So when you study the Buddhadharma you should regard everyone with impartiality.

In the Bodhimanda, you must follow the rules. When you are listening to the Sutra, it is most important not to get up and wander around. And don't recline in your seat or lean over and prop yourself up. You should sit up correctly. Don't be lax and lazy in your attitude. Even if you are a lazy worm, you should not act like one. You should develop yourself into a polite person. Also, don't go to sleep when you come to listen to the Sutra. If you do that then in the future you'll end up like Aniruddha.

The text goes on, "I **attained vast non-obstruction –** that means he became enlightened **– until my outflows were extinguished**." After he became enlightened, he gradually attained the state of having no outflows. **"And I accomplished Arhatship."** He arrived at the fruition of Fourth-Stage Arhat-ship. "**Beneath the Buddha's seat I was sealed and certified as being beyond study.** I always accompanied the Buddha and listened to Dharma beneath his seat. The Buddha sealed and certified me and said that I, too, had attained the Fourth Fruition of Arhatship." Such a stupid person also attained the Fourth Fruition of Arhatship. Those who

are so intelligent haven't even attained the First Fruition. Are you ashamed or aren't you?

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, turning the breath back to emptiness is the foremost method."

Commentary:

Bringing the inhalation and exhalation of the breath back into accordance with emptiness – returning it to empty tranquility: this is the best Dharmadoor.

I've been here for many years, but I've never dared talk about rules. Why? This country advocates freedom. Parents don't watch over their children; the children are free to do as they please. After I came to America, I took disciples, but I, too, didn't watch over them. I let them do what they pleased. They could go wherever they wanted, they could have things their own way. They were very independent. But in the Sutra lecture assembly, I have noticed that some people are just too independent – far more casual than is appropriate. It is said:

If you don't use a compass and square,
You can't make squares and circles.

In Chinese, the characters for compass and square are combined to form a compound which means "rules." If you don't use the compass, you won't get a perfect circle; and if you don't use a square, the square you draw will end up rectangular or triangular. Today, then, in the Shurangama Dharma Assembly, I am telling you not to be lazy. Listen to the Sutras with a respectful attitude. It should be as if the Buddha himself were here speaking the Dharma. You shouldn't think, "This Dharma Master lectures by telling stories and jokes, as if he were entertaining children." It's not really that way. If you can fathom the meaning of the things I say, you can become enlightened. You can be certified to the fruition immediately. All it takes is a genuine determination in seeking the Dharma,

and it can happen. If you are sincere while you are listening to this section on the Twenty-Five Sages, you can become enlightened on the spot. That's because these Twenty-Five Sages have each made vows that they will help whoever studies their Dharma door to become enlightened. So put your mind on investigating the Sutra.

N3 Gavampati: the tongue organ.

Sutra:

Gavampati arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I have mouth-karma created from a past offense. I slighted a Shramana, and in life after life I've had this cow-cud sickness.

Commentary:

Gavampati's name is Sanskrit and means "cow-cud" (牛呞). When cows sleep, they snore, and their tongues flap back and forth, making a terrible racket. Gavampati **arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I have mouth-karma created from a past offense."** What kind of mouth-karma did he create? Once he noticed an old shramana, who was toothless, taking a long time to eat. Gavampati teased the old man, saying, "Old monk, you eat the way a cow chews grass."

The old shramana was a certified Arhat. His reply was, "Oh, you shouldn't talk about me like that. If you do, you will have to undergo retribution in the future. You'd better repent immediately. Better take it back right away."

Gavampati apologized, and so he didn't have to undergo the retribution of being a cow, but even so, he was endowed with cow-like habits ever afterward. His tongue was like a cow's, and he was always chewing his cud and breathing like a cow. Although he was certified to the fruition of Arhatship, the Buddha was afraid that people would slander him in turn, and say that he, too, was like a cow, and that such people would then have to bear the retribution of being cows. For this reason, the Buddha instructed Gavampati to live in the heavens and receive the offerings of the gods. Since gods

all possess the ability to discern past lives, they would not dare to slight him.

In the text, Gavampati goes on to explain, "The way I created mouth-karma was that **I slighted a Shramana.**" He teased the monk. "Shramana" is a Sanskrit word which means "diligent and putting to rest (*qin xi* 勤息)." A Shramana diligently cultivates precepts, samadhi, and wisdom and puts to rest greed, hatred, and stupidity. **"In life after life I've had this cow-cud sickness."** That's my retribution.

Sutra:

"The Thus Come One taught me the mind-ground dharma-door of the purity of a single flavor. My thought was extinguished, I entered samadhi, and contemplated the awareness of flavor as not having a substance and not being a thing. As a result, my mind transcended all worldly outflows.

Commentary:

"The Thus Come One taught me the mind-ground dharma-door of the purity of a single flavor," which means the purity of the one mind. When the tongue does not discriminate tastes – when there is no conscious mind – then all flavors return to purity. This, then, is cultivating a samadhi of non-discrimination. **"My thought was extinguished" –** his conscious mind was quieted, that is, **"I entered samadhi," –** he obtained a proper concentration and proper reception – and he **"contemplated the awareness of flavor as not having a substance and not being a thing."** The awareness of tastes does not come from the substance of the nose, nor does it come from external objects. **"As a result, my mind transcended all worldly outflows."** Just in purifying that one thought, I got out of the outflows of the world.

Sutra:

"Internally I was freed of body and mind, and externally I abandoned the world. I left the three existences far behind, just like a bird released from its cage. I separated from filth and

wiped out defilements, and so my Dharma Eye became pure, and I accomplished Arhatship. The Thus Come One certified me in person as having ascended to the Path Beyond Study.

Commentary:

"Internally I was freed of body and mind. Body and mind were gone – I left them. **Externally I abandoned the world.** I forgot about the world, as well. **I left the three existences far behind."** This refers to existence in the realm of desire, in the realm of form, and in the formless realm. At that time, "I was **just like a bird released from its cage. I separated from filth and wiped out defilements, and so my Dharma Eye became pure.**" This means his Dharma Eye opened, **and** he **"accomplished Arhatship. The Thus Come One certified me in person as having ascended to the Path Beyond Study."**

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, returning flavor and turning awareness around is the superior method."

Commentary:

"Returning flavors" means not making discriminations about them. It is to return the light to illumine within. "Turning awareness around" refers to reversing the mind's discriminations of flavors. "This is the foremost method. This is the best Dharma-door."

N4 Pilindavatsa: the body organ.

Sutra:

Pilindavatsa arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha:

Commentary:

Pilindavatsa's name means "left-over habits" (*yu xi* 餘習). This name represents the fact that he still carried with him many habits from aeons of former lives. He was an Arhat who had been certified to the fruition, and so when he wanted to cross a river, he

could stop the flow of the water at will. In the case of one river, the river-spirit was a female, and when he reached the bank, he called out, "Little servant, stop the flow.'" The spirit did as she was told, but she was very put out, though she didn't show it. She did, however, go and complain to the Buddha.

"I was watching over the flow of the river, and he came and said to me, 'Little Servant, stop the flow.' He's an Arhat. He shouldn't call me that."

The Buddha told Pilindavatsa to apologize to the river-spirit. Pilindavatsa put his palms together and said to her, "I'm sorry, Little Servant." At that, the whole assembly of Arhats burst into laughter.

Now, why did Pilindavatsa call the river-spirit "Little Servant?" It was because in past lives the spirit had in fact been his servant. He was in the habit of addressing her that way, so that now, even though she was a river-spirit, he still called her that. The whole reason he had to apologize was because it upset her when he called her "Little Servant," but his habit was so deep that he even called her that when apologizing.

Sutra:

"When I first left home to follow the Buddha and enter the way, I often heard the Thus Come One explain that there is nothing in this world that brings happiness. Once, when I was begging in the city, I was reflecting on this Dharma-door and did not notice a poisonous thorn on the road until it had pricked my foot. My entire body experienced physical pain, but my mind also had an awareness: though it was aware of strong pain and recognized the feeling of pain, I knew that in my pure heart, there was neither pain nor awareness of pain.

Commentary:

"**When I first left home to follow the Buddha and enter the way, I often heard the Thus Come One explain that there is nothing in this world that brings happiness.** Many times I

listened to the Buddha explain how the things of this world are all suffering, empty, impermanent, and without self. **Once, when I was begging in the city, I was reflecting on this Dharma-door and did not notice a poisonous thorn on the road until it had pricked my foot.** I was thinking with such intensity about the Dharma-door the Thus Come One had taught us, that I wasn't paying attention to the road, and I stepped on a splinter of wood which wounded my foot. **My entire body experienced physical pain**; my whole body hurt from it. **But my mind also had an awareness: though it was aware of strong pain and recognized the feeling of pain, I knew that in my pure heart, there was neither pain nor awareness of pain.** In my pure, original enlightened mind there was no pain or any awareness of pain. When I realized that, everything was empty, and my body and mind became pure. Therefore, I didn't know who was aware of the pain."

Sutra:

"I also thought, 'Is it possible for one body to have two awarenesses?' Having reflected on this for a while, my body and mind were suddenly empty. After twenty-one days, my outflows disappeared. I accomplished Arhatship and received certification in person and a confirmation that I had realized the level beyond study.

Commentary:

"**I also thought, 'Is it possible for one body to have two awarenesses?'** Can I have two simultaneous awarenesses? Can I feel pain on the one hand and on the other hand not be aware of it? No.**' Having reflected on this for a while –** I looked into this for a short time **– my body and mind were suddenly empty. After twenty-one days, my outflows disappeared.** Within three weeks, all my various outflows turned out to be empty. They were all gone. **I accomplished Arhatship and received certification in person and a confirmation that I had realized the level beyond study.** The Buddha himself sealed and certified me and gave me confirmation. I realized the fourth fruition of Arhatship.

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, purifying the awareness and forgetting the body is the superior method."

Commentary:

The Buddha is asking each of us disciples about the path we took. that brought about our initial enlightenment. What I, Philindavatsa did was to remain intent upon the enlightened mind until it was total and pure, and I forgot about my body. This is my Dharma-door of cultivation."

N5 "Born Into Emptiness": the mind organ.

Sutra:

Subhuti arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "From distant kalpas until now, my mind has been unobstructed. I remember as many of my past lives as there are sands in the Ganges River. From the beginning, in my mother's womb, I knew emptiness and tranquility, to the extent that the ten directions became empty and I caused living beings to be certified to the nature of emptiness.

Commentary:

Subhuti's name means "born into emptiness" (*kong sheng* 空生), because at his birth all the treasuries in his household were suddenly empty. Not a single gem remained. Seven days after his birth, the treasures all reappeared. So he was also called "Good Appearance" (*shan xian* 善現). His father and mother went to have his fortune told; it read: "Both good and lucky" (*ji shan qie ji* 即善且吉), so they also named him "Good Luck" (*shan ji* 善吉). He **arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "From distant kalpas until now, my mind has been unobstructed.** My mind and nature attained freedom from hindrance. **I remember as many of my past lives as there are sands in the Ganges River. From the beginning, in my mother's womb, I knew emptiness and tranquility** – I

recognized the nature of emptiness – **to the extent that the ten directions became empty.** All the worlds in the ten directions were empty. **And I caused living beings to be certified to the nature of emptiness.** I enabled living beings to be simultaneously certified to the principles of the nature of emptiness.

Sutra:

"Having received the Thus Come One's revelation that the enlightened nature is true emptiness – that the nature of emptiness is perfect and bright – I attained Arhatship and suddenly entered into the Thus Come One's sea of magnificent, bright emptiness. With knowledge and views identical with the Buddha, I was certified as being beyond study. In the liberation of the nature of emptiness, I am unsurpassed.

Commentary:

"Having received the Thus Come One's revelation that the enlightened nature is true emptiness – that the nature of emptiness is perfect and bright: the nature is the same as emptiness. The Treasury of the Thus Come One – the enlightenment to true emptiness – is perfect and bright. The emptiness and the Treasury of the Thus Come One are both perfect and bright. **I attained Arhatship.** Because I understood the basic substance of the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, I attained the level of Arhatship, **and suddenly entered into the Thus Come One's sea of magnificent, bright emptiness."** The magnificent brightness is once again the Treasury of the Thus Come One. It is like a great sea of emptiness. **"With knowledge and views identical with the Buddha, I was certified as being beyond study."** The Buddha sealed and certified me as being at the level of no further study. **In the liberation of the nature of emptiness, I am unsurpassed.** My understanding comes from the principle of the nature of emptiness I am foremost in understanding emptiness.

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, all appearances enter into nothingness;

nothingness and what becomes nothingness both disappear. Turning dharmas back to the void is the foremost method."

Commentary:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. Now the Buddha is asking all the disciples, the Bodhisattvas, about how they were certified to and obtained the principle of perfect penetration. **As I have been certified to it, all appearances enter into nothingness; nothingness and what becomes nothingness both disappear."** That which brings about emptiness and that which is made empty are both gone. That means that there isn't even any emptiness. In Taoism, this is called, "That which is empty also disappears" (*suo kong ji wu* 所空及無). In Buddhism it is called, "Nothingness and what becomes nothingness both disappear" (*fei suo fei jin* 非所非盡). "**Turning dharmas back to the void is the foremost method.** Turning the nature of dharmas back into the void is the best way. Understanding emptiness is the number one Dharma-door."

The Six Consciousnesses

M3 Perfect penetration through the six consciousnesses.
N1 Shariputra: the eye consciousness.

Sutra:

Shariputra arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "From distant kalpas until the present, my mind and views have been pure. In this way I have undergone as many births as there are grains of sand in the Ganges. As to the various transformations and changes of both the mundane and the transcendental, I am able to understand them at one glance and obtain non-obstruction.

Commentary:

Shariputra's mother's name was Shari, and his name means "Son of Shari" (*qiu zi* 鶖子). He was foremost in wisdom. "Shari" means "pelican." When Shariputra was in his mother's womb, she would debate with her brother Kaushthila, and always defeat him. His uncle then knew that his sister was carrying a wise child. Shariputra **arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "From distant kalpas until the present, my mind and views have been pure. In this way I have undergone as many births as there are grains of sand in the Ganges. As to the various transformations and changes of both the mundane and the transcendental, I am able to understand them at one**

glance and obtain non-obstruction. I can tell at a glance what things are about, whether on the ordinary level, or the sagely level, and toward them I've obtained non-obstruction.

Sutra:

"Once I met the Kashyapas on the road, and I walked along with the brothers. They spoke about causes and conditions, and I awakened to the boundlessness of my mind.

Commentary:

"Once I met the Kashyapas on the road, and I walked along with the brothers. As the Kashyapas walked along, **they spoke about causes and conditions.** Upon hearing this Dharma of causes and conditions, I became enlightened and **awakened to the boundlessness of my mind."**

Before Shariputra left the home-life, he met the Bhikshu Ma Sheng (馬勝, Ashvajit), while walking on the road. Bhikshu Ma Sheng was one of the five Bhikshus the Buddha first crossed over in the Deer Wilds Park. Shariputra saw Bhikshu Ma Sheng walking in a most awesome and correct manner, with magnificent deportment.

His eyes did not glance at things,
His ears did not eavesdrop.

He didn't slip sidelong looks at people, and he didn't listen to what was going on around him.

His eyes watched his nose,
His nose regarded his mouth,
His mouth heeded his heart.

Before this, Shariputra had had a teacher outside the Way who was called the Brahman Sha Ran (沙然梵志). After his teacher died, he had no one to study with. It was then that while walking on the road he met the Bhikshu Ma Sheng and admired him so much. He asked him, "You have fine comportment. Who's your teacher?"

The Bhikshu Ma Sheng replied with a verse:

All dharmas arise from conditions,
All dharmas are extinguished by conditions,
The Buddha, the Great Shramana,
Often speaks like this.

When Shariputra heard that verse, he immediately became enlightened and was certified to the first fruition of Arhatship. He went back to his living quarters and repeated the verse to Maudgalyayana. When Maudgalyayana heard it, he also became enlightened. Then, taking his two hundred disciples with him, he went to take refuge with the Buddha. They left the home life and became part of the assembly that always accompanied the Buddha.

That's how the account is sometimes told. Here the Sutra says that he met the Kashyapa brothers. Since some times the Sutras say that Shariputra met the Kashyapas, and sometimes they say he met the Bhikshu Ma Sheng, I think they were probably all walking together at the time. The Kashyapas and Bhikshu Ma Sheng were on the road together. Notice that the text says, "and walked along with the brothers." "Brothers" means not just the Kashyapa brothers, but also Bhikshu Ma Sheng, who was a Dharma-brother. They were talking about causes and conditions, and one said:

The Dharmas that arise from causes and conditions:
I say that they are empty.
They are false names, as well;
They are also called the meaning of the Middle Way.

Probably when Shariputra heard that verse, he came up to ask, "What are you talking about? Who's your teacher?" And it was then that the Bhikshu Ma Sheng spoke his verse. Upon hearing it, Shariputra became enlightened. Afterward he returned to tell Maudgalyayana, and then they all went to take refuge with the Buddha.

Sutra:

"I followed the Buddha and left the home life. My seeing-awareness became bright and perfect, I obtained fearlessness and became an Arhat. As one of the Buddha's elder disciples, I am born from the Buddha's mouth, transformationally born from the Dharma.

Commentary:

"I followed the Buddha and left the home life. My seeing-awareness became bright and perfect." His seeing became the basic substance of enlightenment and was perfected. **I obtained fearlessness and became an Arhat. As one of the Buddha's elder disciples, I am born from the Buddha's mouth, transformationally born from the Dharma."** Among the Buddha's disciples, Shariputra was an elder.

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, for the mind and the seeing to emit light and for the light to reach throughout knowing and seeing is the foremost method."

Commentary:

"**The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I,** Shariputra, **have been certified to it, for the mind and the seeing to emit light and for the light to reach throughout knowing and seeing is the foremost method.** When the light is ultimate, then the knowing and seeing are empty. This Dharma-door is number one for me.

N2 Universal Worthy: the ear consciousness.

Sutra:

Universal Worthy Bodhisattva arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I have been a Dharma Prince with as many Thus Come Ones as there are sands in the Ganges. The Thus Come Ones of the ten directions

tell their disciples who have the roots of a Bodhisattva to cultivate the Universal Worthy conduct, which is named after me.

Commentary:

Universal Worthy Bodhisattva is a Bodhisattva of Great Conduct. He has ten great, royal vows which we recite at Morning Recitation. They are:

1) To worship and respect all Buddhas.
2) To praise the Thus Come Ones.
3) To cultivate the giving of offerings.
4) To repent and reform all karmic faults.
5) To compliantly rejoice in merit and virtue.
6) To request the turning of the Dharma wheel
7) To request that the Buddha remain in the world.
8) To always follow the Buddhas in study.
9) To forever accord with living beings.
10) To universally transfer all merit and virtue.

These are called the Ten Kings of Vows of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva. In the *Avatamsaka Sutra* there is an entire chapter called, "The Conduct and Vows of Universal Worthy." His practices and the power of his vows are especially great, and so he has a lot of affinities with living beings. He rides a six-tusked white elephant. The color white represents the One Buddha Vehicle, and the six tusks represent the Six Paramitas.

Universal Worthy Bodhisattva **arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I have been a Dharma Prince with as many Thus Come Ones as there are sands in the Ganges.** In the past, with that many Buddhas, I have been a disciple of the Dharma King. **The Thus Come Ones of the ten directions tell their disciples who have the roots of a Bodhisattva –** that is, if they have the propensity for Bodhisattva-hood – **to cultivate the Universal Worthy conduct.** They should

cultivate the Ten Kings of Vows. This conduct is one **which is named after me.**

Sutra:

"World Honored One, I use my mind to listen and distinguish the knowledge and views of living beings. In other regions as many realms away as there are sands in the Ganges, if there is any living being who discovers the conduct of Universal Worthy, I immediately mount my six-tusked elephant and create hundreds of thousands of reduplicated bodies which go to those places. Although their obstacles may be so heavy that they do not see me, I secretly rub their crowns, protect and comfort them, and help them be successful.

Commentary:

"**World Honored One, I use my mind to listen –** I don't use the organ of the ear to hear with; I use my mind **– and distinguish the knowledge and views of living beings.** When I make distinctions about living beings, it is not with the discriminating mind, but with the true mind, to determine the faculties of all living beings. I do this not only in this world, but even **in other regions as many realms away as there are sands in the Ganges –** even in places very, very far away from here. **If there is any living being who discovers** and wants to cultivate the conduct **the conduct of Universal Worthy, I immediately mount my six-tusked elephant and create hundreds of thousands of reduplicated bodies which go to those places.** I make myriad transformation bodies and go to those places. **Although their obstacles may be so heavy that they do not see me,** I still give to that person. **I secretly rub their crowns,** invisible to them though I may be." People who cultivate the Dharma sometimes will feel as if there were a bug crawling on the top of their head or as if someone were patting them on the head. Sometimes one will feel as though there were an insect crawling on one's face. When this happens, you should not try to brush the feeling away with your hand. The reason is that it is actually a Buddha or Bodhisattva rubbing you on the crown. If you

are attentive, you will notice it. They are blessing us, so you should not try to brush them away. If you are sincere, you can experience this feeling. "I **protect and comfort them, and help them be successful.** I help them become accomplished in their cultivation."

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. The basic cause I speak of in my case is listening with the mind to discover and distinguish at ease. This is the foremost method."

Commentary:

"**The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. The basic cause I speak of in my case** is the experience I had on the cause-ground. It **is listening with the mind to discover and distinguish at ease.** I listen in order to discover the knowledge and views of living beings. These discriminations of the true mind are done with ease, and I have obtained self-mastery. **This is the foremost method,** I consider this Dharma-door the best."

People should not get angry, because if they do, demonic obstacles can arise. Be a little less fiery and a little more intent upon your study of the Buddhadharma.

N3 Sundarananda: the nose consciousness.

Sutra:

Sundarananda arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "When I first left home and followed the Buddha to enter the Way, I received the complete precepts, but my mind was always too scattered for samadhi, and I could not attain the state of having no outflows. The World Honored One taught Kaushthila and me to contemplate the white spot at the tip of our noses.

Commentary:

There was Nanda, Ananda, and Sundarananda. **Sundarananda** was the Buddha's cousin. The first part of his name is Sundari, after his wife; "Sundari" means "beautiful." She was captivating

"Nanda," the latter part of his name, means "happiness" (*xi* 喜). Since there were several disciples with similar names, he was referred to as Sundari's Nanda. Sundarananda **arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "When I first left home and followed the Buddha to enter the Way, I received the complete precepts, but my mind was always too scattered for samadhi, and I could not attain the state of having no outflows.** I cultivated the Way with the Buddha and I carefully observed the precepts, but my samadhi-power was not sufficient. My mind was always on the move. I could not accomplish the level of being without outflows. **The World Honored One taught Kaushthila an me to contemplate the white spot at the tip of our noses.** Because I was so scattered, the Buddha taught me and also taught Shariputra's uncle, Mahakaushthila, to look at the tips of our noses and regard the little white spot that appears when both eyes stare there.

Sutra:

"From the first, I contemplated intently. After three weeks, I saw that the breath in my nostrils looked like smoke when I inhaled and exhaled. My body and mind became bright inside, and I perfectly understood the external world, to the point that everything became empty and pure, like crystal. The smoky appearance gradually disappeared, and the breath in my nostrils became white.

Commentary:

He goes on to say, "When I cultivated according to this method and developed my skill, **from the first, I contemplated intently. After three weeks, I saw that the breath in my nostrils looked like smoke when I inhaled and exhaled.** I regarded the white spot at the tip of my nose with great concentration. After twenty-one days, my breath looked like smoke. **My body and mind became bright inside, and I perfectly understood the external world.** Inside there was light, and I was clear about what was going on in all the worlds, **to the point that everything became empty and**

pure, like crystal. My body, mind, and the world became emptiness and was pure in substance. It was all as clear as crystal. The breath in my nostrils had become like smoke, but this subsided. **The smoky appearance gradually disappeared, and the breath in my nostrils became white.** From daily contemplation like this, my breath became white like the white spot at the tip of my nose."

Sutra:

"My mind opened and my outflows were extinguished. Every inhalation and exhalation of breath was transformed into light which illumined the ten directions, and I attained Arhatship. The World Honored One predicted that in the future I would obtain Bodhi.

Commentary:

"**My mind opened and my outflows were extinguished.** When my breath became white, my mind suddenly opened to enlightenment, and I put an end to all outflows. **Every inhalation and exhalation of breath was transformed into light which illumined the ten directions, and I attained Arhatship.** First my breath looked smoky, then it became white like the tip of my nose, and finally it turned into light! The light shone on everything in the Dharma realm of the ten directions. **The World Honored One predicted that in the future I would obtain Bodhi.** He said that in the future I would certainly become a Buddha.

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I did it by means of the disappearance of the breath, until eventually the breath emitted light and the light completely extinguished my outflows. This is the foremost method."

Commentary:

Sundarananda says that he thinks cultivation of the nose-consciousness is extremely important. For him, it was the best Dharma-door.

N4 Purnamaitreyaniputra: the tongue consciousness.

Sutra:

Purnamaitreyaniputra arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "For vast kalpas I have possessed unobstructed eloquence. When I discuss suffering and emptiness I penetrate deeply into the actual appearance, and in the same way, I give subtle, wonderful instruction to the assembly concerning the secret Dharma doors of as many Thus Come Ones as there are sands in the Ganges. I have also obtained fearlessness.

Commentary:

Purnamaitreyaniputra is named after his father and mother. "Purna," which means "completeness" (*man* 满) was his father's name. "Maitreyani," which means "compassion" (*ci* 慈), was his mother's name. "Putra" means "son" (*zi* 子). So he was the "Son of Completeness and Compassion." He **arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "For vast kalpas I have possessed unobstructed eloquence."** There are four kinds of eloquence:

1) Unobstructed eloquence with dharmas.
2) Unobstructed eloquence in meaning.
3) Unobstructed eloquence in phrasing.
4) Unobstructed eloquence with delight in speaking.

No matter what dharma he discussed, he could explain it very clearly. Not only that, but he brought forth the meaning in just a sentence or two. His skill in phrasing was such that he could say a few words that would encompass infinitely many meanings. He was brief and to the point. No matter what you wanted explained, he thoroughly enjoyed doing it. He was not like Kshudrapanthaka, who refused to speak the Dharma when he was a Dharma-Master, and as a result ended up being terribly stupid. Purna liked to speak the Dharma. **"When I discuss suffering and emptiness I penetrate deeply into the actual appearance."** He would tell how

all things are suffering, are empty, are impermanent, and lack self. But when he did so, his explanation of this doctrine reached all the way through to the doctrine of the actual appearance, where there is no appearance, and yet there is nothing which does not have an appearance. **"And in the same way, I give subtle, wonderful instruction to the assembly concerning the secret Dharma doors of as many Thus Come Ones as there are sands in the Ganges."** He was able to discuss the most esoteric doctrines and reveal them to living beings by means of subtle principles. "**I have also obtained fearlessness.** I have obtained unobstructed eloquence and the power of fearlessness."

Sutra:

"The World Honored One knew that I had great eloquence, and so he made use of my voice in turning the wheel of the Dharma. He taught me how to disseminate it. I joined the Buddha to help him turn the wheel. I accomplished Arhatship through the lion's roar. The World Honored One certified me as being foremost in speaking Dharma.

Commentary:

Purna accomplished the Way by means of the tongue-consciousness. He did it by speaking Dharma. So you see, it is possible to become enlightened and to be certified to the fruition by speaking the Dharma. All you need to do is to deeply enter one door in your cultivation. Decide on one and then cultivate it. Don't be scattered in your practice, doing one Dharma today, switching to another one tomorrow, and changing your mind again the day after. When you change around like that you waste your time, and you never master any Dharma. You have to choose one and vigorously develop your skill in it.

"The World Honored One knew that I had great eloquence, and so he made use of my voice in turning the wheel of the Dharma. He taught me how to disseminate it." No one could out-debate Purna. When he spoke the Dharma, his voice was full and resonant and powerful. In a gathering of a thousand or even ten

thousand, people there would have been no need for him to use a microphone or amplifying system. He could be heard easily. "The Buddha taught me to lecture the Sutras and speak Dharma. **I joined the Buddha to help him turn the wheel. I accomplished Arhatship through the lion's roar.** I would represent the Buddha in speaking the Dharma, and my voice became like the lion's roar." When the lion roars, the myriad creatures cower. When the heavenly demons and adherents of external paths heard his voice, they were subdued. **"The World Honored One certified me as being foremost in speaking Dharma."**

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I used the sound of Dharma to subdue demons and adversaries and melt away my outflows. This is the foremost method."

Commentary:

"**The Buddha asks about perfect penetration.** With my tongue I proclaimed **the sound of Dharma to subdue demons and adversaries.** I tamed the heavenly demons and controlled the five adversary desires: wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep." These five desires are hostile thieves that steal people's treasures, "In this way I was able to **melt away my outflows. This is the foremost method.** I used the tongue-consciousness and proclaimed the wonderful Dharma. This is the best method."

N5 Upali: the body consciousness.

Sutra:

Upali arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I followed the Buddha in person when he fled the city and left the home-life. I observed the Thus Come One endure six years of diligent asceticism. I watched the Thus Come One subdue all the demons, control adherents of external paths and become liberated from all outflows which were based on worldly desire and greed.

Commentary:

Upali is foremost in holding the precepts. His name means "Superior Leader" (*shang shou* 上首). He never committed the slightest infraction of the precepts spoken by the Buddha. His lay name was Channa. He was with the Buddha when they left the palace and went into the mountains. He was extremely familiar with all the events of the Buddha's life, because he was the person who had followed the Buddha the longest. When the five bhikshus left the Buddha, Upali did not leave. He stayed by his side and served Shakyamuni Buddha as he cultivated the Way. Upali **arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I followed the Buddha in person when he fled the city and left the home-life."** At that time, Upali, who was then Channa, first accompanied the Buddha to the eastern gate of the city. The Buddha, who was then a prince, went out looking for some excitement, because he was bored in the palace. At the gate they observed a woman by the side of the road giving birth to a child. She was weeping and wailing and writhing in pain. The prince asked Channa, "What's going on? Why is she crying so violently?" When Channa told him, he was shocked to find that birth involved so much suffering. After the child was born, the prince was upset and said, "We're going back, I don't want to go sightseeing today."

The next day they went to the southern gate to do some more sightseeing. There they saw an old person. His head shook, his vision was blurred, his teeth had fallen out, and he could hardly walk. The prince asked Channa, "What kind of person is that?"

"That person is very old."

"Oh," was his reply. "That's what getting old is like! That's too much suffering," and once again he didn't want to go any further.

The third day they went to the western gate. There they saw a sick person afflicted with an ugly and violent disease. "Why is that person in such horrible shape?" asked the Prince.

"That person is sick," was Channa's reply. Once again the Prince was troubled and did not want to travel further.

The fourth day they went to the northern gate and came across a person who had just died. When the prince asked about him, Channa told him that that was what death was like.

The Prince was stunned at having seen birth, old age, sickness, and death. At that moment, a monk walked by wearing the robe and sash. When the prince saw him, he asked Channa what he was. Channa said, “Ask him and find out.” The Prince, who was to become Shakyamuni Buddha, asked the monk, “What do you do?”

“I’m a person who has left the home-life.”

“What does that mean?” asked the Prince.

“People who leave the home-life are called bhikshus. They leave home in order to escape the suffering of birth, old age, sickness, and death. Once we understand the Way, then there is neither production nor extinction – we do not have to be born or die, and we can accomplish Buddhahood.”

“Can you tell me how to leave home?” asked the Prince. “Can you be my teacher?”

This bhikshu was actually a god from the Heaven of Pure Dwelling. Seeing that conditions were ripe, the god intentionally transformed himself to come take Shakyamuni Buddha across. When the prince asked the bhikshu to be his teacher, the monk beat his staff once on the ground, ascended into space, and entered the heavens. The prince had no way to study the Path and no method for leaving the home life, so he returned to the palace.

Meanwhile, a prognosticator who looked at physiognomies told the King, “If the prince does not leave home in the next seven days, he will attain the position of a wheel-turning king; he will rule over all the countries of the world. All you have to do is keep him here for a week.”

Thereupon his father, the Pure Rice King took action and stationed his armed forces all around the palace to cut off all traffic in and out of the palace. A curfew prevailed and no one was allowed in or out of the palace. Thus, the prince was surrounded

and watched at all times. In this way the Pure Rice King hoped that his son, Prince Siddhartha, would attain the position of a wheel-turning king. A wheel-turning king rules over the four great continents: Purvavideha to the east, Jambudvipa to the south, Aparagodaniya to the west, and Uttarakuru to the north. One world-system is composed of one set of the four great continents, as well as one sun, one moon, and one Mount Sumeru. A thousand of these small world-systems is called a middle sized world system. One thousand middle-sized world systems is called a great world-system. This is the meaning of the phrase "Three-thousand-great-thousand world-system." A wheel-turning king rules over one small world-system.

The prince had extremely good roots, and so although he was being watched, he did not become confused. The king sent many beautiful women to the quarters of the prince for him to enjoy. But the prince looked upon then with unseeing eyes. He listened with deaf ears. As it is said:

The eyes see form,
but inside there is nothing.
The ears listen to sounds,
but the mind is not aware of them.

Or again:

Inside there is no body and mind.
Outside there is no world.

Then the god from the Heaven of Pure Dwelling appeared and spoke with the Prince. "Prince, are you so greedy for the pleasures of this world that you have forgotten your vows from former lives? Do you remember your past vows?"

Prince Siddhartha said, "I haven't forgotten. But at present there's nothing I can do."

The god from the Heaven of Pure Dwelling said, “If you have not forgotten and you still want to leave the home-life and cultivate the Way, I can help you.”

“Excellent!” said the Prince.

The god told Channa – that is, Upali, whom we are now discussing – to prepare the horse, and the Prince and Channa went to the back garden of the palace to escape. At that point the Four Heavenly Kings appeared, and, each taking one of the horse’s legs, lifted up the horse, the Prince, and Upali into space and flew away with them. They mounted the clouds and rode the fog for three yojanas and then alighted in the Snowy Mountains.

The Prince began to cultivate the Way there in the mountains. As a response from the gods, there was rice and sesame there, and every day Shakyamuni Buddha ate one grain of each to stay alive. Then three members of his father’s clan and two members of his mother’s clan came to cultivate there with him. Three could not take the ascetic practices and began to have doubts. “Cultivation is too much suffering. When can we ever get to be Buddhas? Let’s leave.” These three left and went to the Deer Wilds Park to cultivate the Way. Eventually a heavenly maiden brought an offering of milk gruel for the Prince, because he was nothing but skin and bones. After he drank the milk gruel, his body began to fill out naturally. But the two who were still with him said, “He could take suffering before, but now he can’t. Now that he has drunk that milk gruel, he won’t have any accomplishment. He couldn’t take it. Let’s go.” So the paternal relatives and the maternal relatives all left; only the Venerable Upali remained. So he says, “I followed the Buddha in person when he fled the city and left the home-life. I was with him in the palace garden when he mounted the horse and flew out of the city. **I observed the Thus Come One endure six years of diligent asceticism.** For six years he endured bitterness that is difficult to endure. **I watched the Thus Come One subdue all the demons.** The Prince could have accomplished Buddhahood right there on the Snowy Mountains. But he was concerned that people might

mistakenly think that to accomplish Buddhahood you have to be a total ascetic. So he stopped meditating in the mountains and went to the Bodhi Tree. He sat down beneath it and made the vow not to get up until he had become a Buddha.

After the Prince had sat there beneath the Bodhi Tree for forty-eight days, the King of Demons in the Sixth Desire Heaven had a dream. He dreamed of thirty-two transformations. When he awoke, being able to reckon and contemplate, he looked into the reason for this strange dream and found that a Bodhisattva was sitting beneath the Bodhi Tree just about to accomplish Buddhahood. “This will never do,” he thought. “I must find a way to destroy his concentration.” He sent four demonic women, each of whom was exquisite. Demons are weird creatures, but they also dislike being ugly. They went to disturb Shakyamuni Buddha’s samadhi by manifesting thirty-two enticing transformations. They were trying to seduce Shakyamuni Buddha. They wanted him to have an ordinary thought and thereby leave his samadhi. They wanted to arouse his desire. But the Buddha neither loved them nor desired them. Although he was not made of straw or rock – as the saying goes, “People aren’t grass or wood; who doesn’t have emotion?” – yet Shakyamuni Buddha could go through this experience and not be turned by it. He was not shaken by the demonic power of these women. He remained in a state of unmoving suchness. His mind did not move in the slightest, he did not give rise to love or desire.

Faced with this state his thoughts did not arise. During this episode, Shakyamuni Buddha was contemplating impurity, similar to the Contemplation of the Nine Aspects discussed above. He thought, “Oh, you’ve come to cheat me. Although you are beautiful now, you’ll turn into skeletons. Your nine apertures are always oozing impurities. Your eyes ooze tears and matter, your ears ooze wax, your noses have mucus, your mouths have saliva and phlegm – all of it’s unclean. Add to that excrement and urine, and you’re even filthier. Besides that, there are lots of germs in every pore of your body. Your entire bodies are foul.” His contemplation turned the four demonic women into old bags. They took a look at one

another; their skin was like chicken's feet and their hair was white as cranes. Their noses were dripping and their mouths were drooling. They were total wrecks. They looked at one another and began to vomit. Realizing that they had all become old and withered and that they had no way to cheat Shakyamuni Buddha, they left. Once the demon king saw that the four demon women had come back without success, he went with his demon sons and grandsons to kill Shakyamuni Buddha. But the Buddha was still unmoved. He wasn't afraid. He had entered the non-contention samadhi. If you move your mind, the demons will get you. If you don't move your mind, they can't get you. The demons couldn't disturb Shakyamuni Buddha.

Also an externalist master named Shen Jih (申日) put poison in some food and gave it to Shakyamuni Buddha to kill him. When the Buddha saw the food, he thought, "If there is no poison in my mind, then when I eat this poison, it won't poison me." So he ate the food and didn't die.

Another externalist master was jealous of Shakyamuni Buddha. Before the Buddha arrived on the scene the Brahmans were in the majority. Everyone believed in them. After the Buddha had cultivated for six years and had realized Buddhahood, the externalist disciples went to bow to Shakyamuni Buddha. Kashyapa, Mahamaudgalyayana, and Shariputra had all been adherents of externalist paths. For this reason, the externalist masters were jealous. They fed wine to some elephants – five of them – and sent them to the Buddha to trample him. Who would have guessed that when the elephants approached the Buddha, the Buddha would stretch out his hand and five lions would come from his five fingers, scaring the elephants nearly to death. The Buddha had great power to subdue the demons and external paths.

He also subdued greed and desire. Love is the hardest thing to subdue. It makes people live like a drunkard and die in a dream. If you can't get rid of it, you can't get rid of your outflows. You have

outflows because you have love and emotion. Living beings are confused by emotion.

Heavy karma and confused emotions
make a living being.
Karma ended and emotion emptied;
that is the Buddha.

Buddhas become Buddhas because they have ended love and emotion. Living beings are living beings because of heavy love and emotion; because of it they are unable to escape bondage on the wheel of birth and death, and they flow out into the three realms. Without outflows,

The sea of suffering is boundless;
A turn of the head is the other shore.

That is liberation from worldly greed and outflows.

Sutra:

"I based myself on the Buddha's teaching of precepts, encompassing the three thousand awesome deportments and the eighty thousand subtle aspects. Both my direct karma and my contributing karma became pure. My body and mind became tranquil, and I accomplished Arhatship.

Commentary:

"I based myself on the Buddha's teaching of precepts." Upali accompanied the Buddha in person when the Buddha left the home-life; he himself saw the Buddha cultivate ascetic practices for six years in the Himalayas; he himself saw the Buddha sit beneath the Bodhi tree, see a star one night, and awaken to the Way; he himself saw the Buddha subdue the demons and control adherents of external paths, and so forth until he accomplished Buddhahood. Upali witnessed all of it. After Shakyamuni Buddha accomplished the Way and began teaching, he saw that the Venerable Upali had been foremost in holding precepts in the assemblies of limitless

Buddhas of the past. When Shakyamuni Buddha came to the Saha World this time and accomplished Buddhahood, the Venerable Upali came to this world at the same time. So the Buddha told him to concentrate on the cultivation of the precepts within the Buddhadharma.

I will speak about the precepts now, and all of you students of Buddhadharma should take notes.

First are the *Five Precepts*:

1. Do not kill.
2. Do not steal.
3. Do not commit sexual misconduct.
4. Do not lie.
5. Do not take intoxicants.

Next are the *Eight Precepts*, which include the five precepts already listed, together with:

6. Do not adorn the body with flowers, fragrances, beads, or fragrant oils.
7. Do not use high, grand, or big beds and do not look at, listen to, or participate in musical entertainment.

By not sleeping in a grand bed, you train yourself not to be arrogant.

8. Do not eat at improper times.

Not eating at improper times means not eating after noon. Not eating after noon helps train you against greed, because if you can eat anytime you want, then you will simply want to eat all the time. Laypeople can take these precepts.

Novices have ten precepts which cannot be taken by laypeople. It's not the case that after taking the Five Precepts you are considered a member of the Sangha. Taking the Eight Precepts does not classify one as a member of the Sangha, nor does receiving the Ten Major and Forty-Eight Minor Bodhisattva Precepts. To be a

member of the Sangha you must first take the Ten Shramanera Precepts, then the two hundred fifty Bhikshu Precepts, or the three hundred forty-eight Bhikshuni Precepts, and then the Ten Major and Forty-Eight Minor Bodhisattva Precepts. It's not the case that just because this is America, you can decide to do things in a new and different way. You can't just create a new universe and say, "Everyone is a member of the Sangha." I've heard it said that even the tables and chairs are members of the Sangha! Cups, bowls, chopsticks – plates and silverware – everything's the Sangha! This is ridiculous – it's unspeakably wonderful. In that case, nothing in the world would not be the Sangha. If everything in the world were the Sangha, then why would the Sangha have to assemble together? I think this is something I've never seen or heard of before – it's truly unprecedented.

The word "precept" is "Pratimoksha" in Sanskrit. It is also called "Shila." The meaning is to "stop evil and guard against transgressions,"

Don't do any evil.
Offer up all good conduct.

Once an elderly upasaka asked an elderly Bodhisattva, a person who had left the home-life for a long time, how to cultivate the Way. The high monk said to him: "You should not do any evil and offer up all good conduct."

The elderly upasaka said, "I needed you to tell me that? Even a three-year-old knows that phrase."

The high monk replied, "A three-year-old child may know the words, but most eighty-year-olds can't put them into practice."

In this day and age, a lot of people set up groups and call themselves a "Sangha." You should find out how many precepts they have received. If they have not taken the complete precepts, they cannot refer to themselves as "Sangha." If they protest and say that they are new and different, then they should not call themselves Buddhists. If they do not venerate and adhere to the long-standing

rules and precepts of Buddhism, what kind of Buddhists are they? Neo-Buddhists, they reply. Then ask them what's new about them. The Buddha himself could speak Dharma in the heavens, he could speak Dharma in the hells, he could proclaim the Dharma among people and go to the dragon palaces to teach. Where can these Neo-Buddhists speak Dharma? Ask them that.

"That's myth," they may reply. "Of course we can't go there. You can create your own myths. You can be living myths."

If any one of them had the abilities of a certain one of my disciples present in this assembly (who has opened his five eyes) they still would not have the right to change the structure of the Buddhadharma; and they don't have nearly as much talent. What right do they have to alter Buddhism? When you go into business, you have to have some capital. If you want to be a high official in government, you have to be a college graduate. If these people decide to be Neo-Buddhists, what is their foundation?

What they retort is, "We teach the Buddha's Four Truths, the Six Paramitas, and the twelve conditioned links, and we use the Buddhist mantras. We recite the Sutras of the Buddha." Then ask them, "If you recite the Buddhist Sutras and recite the Buddhist mantras, in what way are you new?" It's too paradoxical.

I hope you young American students will strive to counteract this mistake. Otherwise, the decline of the Dharma is imminent. Shakyamuni Buddha himself predicted that in the Dharma Ending Age the children and grandchildren of the demons would come into the world in full force. And when Shakyamuni Buddha subdued the demon kings and controlled adherents of external paths, the Demon, Pou Ts'un, confirmed this. He said, "I can't get at you right now, but in the future I will certainly destroy your teaching."

"How will you manage to do that?" inquired the Buddha.

"I will have my children and grandchildren enter your religion, eat your food, wear your clothes, and sully your vessels with excrement and urine. They will destroy your religion from within. Because of them, no one will believe you." Now is the time that he

spoke of. Shakyamuni Buddha long ago saw what is taking place today.

They will wear the Buddha's clothes,
They will eat the Buddha's food.

But within Buddhism they won't do the Buddha's work.

Among the Buddha's disciples, the Venerable Upali was foremost in holding precepts. In Buddhism there are Vinaya Masters who specialize in maintaining the precepts, and there are Dharma Masters who explain the Sutras and speak the Dharma. Dharma Master has two meanings:

1. One who gives the Dharma to others.
2. One who takes the Dharma as Master.

There are also Teaching Masters, who investigate the teachings; and there are Dhyana Masters, who investigate Ch'an and sit in meditation.

When the Buddha was in the world, people relied on the Buddha as their teacher. When the Buddha left the world, he instructed the bhikshus and bhikshunis to take the precepts as their teacher. So the most important thing for them is to guard the precepts. Vinaya Masters, such as the Venerable Upali, specialize in this. He says, **"I based myself on the Buddha's teaching of precepts, encompassing the three thousand awesome deportments."** To determine the meaning of "three thousand awesome deportments," you calculate the two hundred fifty bhikshu precepts with regard to walking, the two hundred fifty precepts with regard to sitting, the two hundred fifty precepts with regard to standing, and the two hundred fifty precepts with regarding to lying down. That totals one thousand awesome deportments, which multiplied by the three karmas of body, mouth, and mind, make three thousand.

Each of the Four Great Awesome Deportments of walking, sitting, standing, and lying down has its particular aspect.

1. Walk like the wind.

This "wind" does not refer to a hurricane, but to a gentle breeze, a zephyr. One should walk in a slow and stately manner, and not be impulsive and rush around recklessly.

2. Stand like a pine.

Stand up straight like the pine tree, and do not slouch or lean this way or that.

3. Sit like a bell.

This refers to the huge, heavy bells of old that hung solid and unmoving.

4. Lie like a bow.

One should lie down in the "auspicious lying-down" position: lie on your right side with your right hand under your cheek and your left hand resting on your left thigh.

"**The eighty thousand subtle aspects:** eighty-thousand is a round figure. It refers to the eighty-four thousand aspects of conduct. This figure is derived by multiplying the deportments of the three karmas of body, mouth, and mind by their seven branches (greed, hatred, stupidity, killing, stealing, lying, harsh speech, loose speech, and gossip), making twenty-one thousand, and multiplying them by the four afflictions (greed, hatred, stupidity, or some of each). That is what the "eighty thousand subtle aspects" refer to. "I upheld these aspects," continues the Venerable Upali, "and **both my direct karma and my contributing karma became pure.**" "Direct karma" refers to the Four Fundamental Prohibitions: killing, stealing, lust, and lying. Any of these acts is fundamentally wrong and a direct violation. If one commits one of these four prohibited deeds, there is no chance of repentance. That's what is said, but if you actually violate one of these precepts and you firmly resolve to change your ways, you still have a chance.

"Contributing karma," refers to acts which lead you to commit offenses which you basically would never have committed. For instance, there was once a person who received the five precepts,

but eventually he found it hard to guard them and decided one day that it wouldn't hurt if he took a little drink of wine. "I can see the sense in holding to the precepts against killing, stealing, lust, and lying, but I don't think it would matter to transgress the prohibition against alcohol," he rationalized. So he went out and bought some brandy, or perhaps it was whisky. He got back home with the bottle, but then realized he didn't have any appetizers to accompany the drink. "A little fried chicken to chase this whisky would be great," he mused. Just as he thought that, the neighbor's chicken strayed into his yard. Glancing quickly to the left and right and finding no one looking, he snatched up the pullet, thereby violating the precept against stealing. Then he lopped off the chicken's head, breaking the precept against killing. Engrossed in his whisky and fried chicken, he noticed the neighbor lady approaching. "I lost one of my chickens," she said. "Have you seen it?"

"I haven't seen it," he denied, thereby violating the precept against lying. Then he took a second look at the woman. Although she wasn't stunning, she was certainly passable. His lust arose, and he had his way with her. All that happened because he violated the precept against taking intoxicants. That's how contributing karma works.

This is also why it's said that eating meat is a violation of the precept against killing. If you didn't eat meat, you wouldn't have any connection with the slaughter of animals. The same goes for cultivating the earth. People who strictly adhere to the precepts do not plow the earth, because in doing so you can kill many living beings. These are all examples of contributing karma.

The venerable Upali explains, "I upheld the precepts until all aspects of my karma were purified. **My body and mind became tranquil, and I accomplished Arhatship.** When extreme purity was reached, I was certified to the fruition of sagehood."

Sutra:

"In the Thus Come One's assembly, I am a governor of the law. The Buddha himself certified my mind's upholding of the

precepts and my genuine cultivation of them. I am considered a leader of the assembly.

Commentary:

"In the Thus Come One's assembly, I am a governor of the law." He was a superior seated one, a leader of the assembly. He was a model for everyone, exemplary in the Dharma. Multitudes of people studied with him. The precepts were governed by the Venerable Upali. "**The Buddha himself certified my mind's upholding of the precepts and my genuine cultivation of them.** The World Honored One personally verified my vigor in upholding the precepts. I firmly maintained the precepts and cultivated according to them. **I am considered a leader of the assembly,** since I am foremost in holding the precepts."

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I disciplined the body until the body attained ease and comfort. Then I disciplined the mind until the mind attained penetrating clarity. After that, the body and mind experienced keen and thorough absorption. This is the foremost method."

Commentary:

"**The Buddha asks about perfect penetration.** He wants to know which of us has achieved it. **I disciplined the body until the body attained ease and comfort.** I upheld the precepts in order to cultivate the body. **Then I disciplined the mind until the mind attained penetrating clarity.** When I had cultivated the body to the point that I did not transgress the precepts involving the body, I then cultivated the mind. I maintained the precepts in my mind. The precepts involving the body belong to the practices of the Arhats of the Small Vehicle. Precepting the mind is what Bodhisattvas do. Bodhisattvas do not violate precepts even in their minds. **After that, the body and mind experienced keen and thorough absorption. This is the foremost method.** My body and mind were extremely comfortable and blissful. **This is the foremost**

method. The Dharma door of holding the precepts to cultivate the body is the number one way, in my opinion.”

N6 Mahamaudgalyayana: the mind consciousness.

Sutra:

Great Maudgalyayana arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “Once when I was out on the road begging for food, I met the three Kashyapa brothers – Uruvilva, Gaya, and Nadi – who proclaimed for me the Thus Come One’s profound principle of causes and conditions. I immediately brought forth resolve and obtained a great understanding.

Commentary:

Great Maudgalyayana arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha – Maudgalyayana’s name means “descended from bean gatherers.” He said, **“Once when I was out on the road begging for food, I met the three Kashyapa brothers – Uruvilva, Gaya, and Nadi.”** Uruvilva’s name means “papaya grove,” and he got the name because he had a growth on his body that was shaped like a papaya. Gaya was named after a mountain. Nadi was named after a river. “The three brothers **proclaimed for me the Thus Come One’s profound principle of causes and conditions.** They discussed the Buddha’s Dharma, specifically the doctrine of causes and conditions. That is,

> *I say that the dharmas which arise from conditions are all empty; that they are also given the name falseness; and that they are known as the meaning of the Middle Way.*

When they elaborated on this meaning, **I immediately brought forth resolve and obtained a great understanding.”**

Earlier, Shariputra had heard the above verse, had become enlightened, and had been certified to the first stage of Arhatship. He returned to his living quarters and told Maudgalyayana, “I encountered some bhikshus today who are disciples of the Buddha.

They spoke a verse for me." When Shariputra repeated the verse for Mahamaudgalyayana, he, too, became enlightened. The two of them then went together to take refuge with the Buddha and bow to him as their teacher. Some say that Shariputra encountered the bhikshu Ma Sheng who spoke this verse for him.

All dharmas arise from conditions;
All dharmas cease to be because of conditions;
The Buddha, the Great Shramana,
Always explains it thus.

They say that this verse brought about Shariputra's awakening. In general, he heard the disciples talking about the dharma of causes and conditions and became enlightened, as did Maudgalyayana. The "profound principle" refers to Dharmas used to teach Bodhisattvas. Dharma used for Arhats would be shallow principles. The profound principles, then, are the state of the Great Vehicle.

Sutra:

"The Thus Come One accepted me, and the kashaya was on my body and my hair fell out by itself. I roamed in the ten directions, having no impeding obstructions. I discovered my spiritual penetrations, which are esteemed as unsurpassed, and I accomplished Arhatship.

Commentary:

"**The Thus Come One accepted me, and the kashaya was on my body.** When I arrived at the Buddha's place, he said, 'It's good you've come, bhikshu. Let your hair fall by itself, and the kashaya clothe you.'" By the power of the Buddha's spiritual penetrations, Maudgalyayana's hair and beard fell away at those words. In those times, when someone decided to leave home, they did so immediately. They didn't stop to think it over. They were not like people of today who can never make up their minds. When Maudgalyayana's hair and beard fell out, he assumed the appearance of a bhikshu. He relates, **"I roamed in the ten directions, having no impeding obstructions."** Maudgalyayana was foremost in

spiritual penetrations. After he left the home life, he obtained spiritual powers that allowed him to go to all the worlds of the ten directions and perform changes and transformations at will. His spiritual penetrations were unhindered. **"I discovered my spiritual penetrations, which are esteemed as unsurpassed, and I accomplished Arhatship."**

Sutra:

"Not only the World Honored One, but the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions praise my spiritual powers as perfectly clear and pure, masterful, and fearless.

Commentary:

"**Not only the World Honored One, but the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions praise my spiritual powers.** It's not just the World Honored One, Shakyamuni Buddha, who praises me. The Thus Come Ones of the ten directions acclaim my spiritual penetrations and wonderful functioning. They commend them **as perfectly clear and pure, masterful, and fearless.**

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. By means of a spiral-like attention to the profound, the light of my mind was revealed, just as muddy water clears. Eventually it became pure and dazzling. This is the foremost method."

Commentary:

"**The Buddha asks about perfect penetration.** Now the Buddha is questioning his disciples, each person who cultivates the Way, as to what particular skill they developed that brought about their enlightenment. **By means of a spiral-like attention to the profound –** I worked my way back to profound purity – until **the light of my mind was revealed.** My mind emitted light, **just as muddy water clears.** It was just like letting turbid water settle until it becomes pure. **Eventually it became pure and dazzling.** When it had settled long enough, it was naturally clear and sparkling. **This is the foremost method.** I cultivated the skill of spiraling back to

the profundity of the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. This is the best way.”

The Seven Elements

M4 Perfect penetration through the seven elements.
N1 Ucchushma : the fire element.

Sutra:

Ucchushma came before the Buddha, put his palms together, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I can still remember how many kalpas ago I was filled with excessive greed and desire. There was a Buddha in the world named King of Emptiness. He said that people with too much desire turn into a raging mass of fire. He taught me to contemplate the coolness and warmth throughout my entire body.

Commentary:

Ucchushma is a powerful Vajra Lord. He is one of those whom this Sutra refers to as Vajra Secret Traces – that is, Dharma Protectors. The history of these Dharma protectors was as follows: limitless kalpas ago, there was a Wheel-Turning King whose first wife gave birth to a thousand sons. The Wheel-Turning King understood the Buddhadharma. He had his thousand sons draw lots; they would become Buddhas in the order of the numbers they drew. The thousand Buddhas of this kalpa, the Worthy Kalpa, are the sons of that Wheel-Turning King. Kanakamuni Buddha became the first Buddha, and Shakyamuni Buddha was the fourth Buddha of the

Auspicious Kalpa, so called because it is a time when worthies and sages appear in the world. Another of the Wheel-Turning King's wives had two sons. The elder son vowed that when each of his thousand brothers became a Buddha, he would go to that place and make offerings to them. The younger brother made a vow that when each of his brothers became a Buddha, he would go and protect him – he would be a Vajra-Powerful Lord.

Why does it say that he **came before the Buddha**, instead of saying that he arose from his seat? This is because Vajra-Powerful Lords are spirits, and spirits cannot sit in the presence of the Buddha. They stand. There is no seat available to them in the Buddha's assemblies. As for ghosts, they are not only forbidden to sit down; they aren't even given a place to stand. They must kneel. The Dharma Protectors must kneel to hear the Dharma. In this very assembly now there are many ghosts kneeling to listen to the Sutra. If you can't see them yourself, you don't have to take my word for it. You can ask my disciple who has his five eyes open. He will tell you.

Ucchushma came before the Buddha, **put his palms together, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I can still remember how many kalpas ago I was filled with excessive greed and desire."** This person had a tremendous amount of desire. He was obsessed with women. He probably inherited it from his father, who, as a Wheel-Turning King, also had a lot of desire and lust. "At that time, **there was a Buddha in the world named King of Emptiness.** He spoke Dharma for me; **He said that people with too much desire turn into a raging mass of fire.** In the future they will fall into the hells and be seared by a furious fire. The Thus Come One, King of Emptiness **taught me to contemplate the coolness and warmth throughout my entire body.**" Why do people have excessive desire? It comes from a "fire of desire" in the body. So the Buddha, King of Emptiness, had him return the light and look within at the fire in his own body. He observed the fire of his desire.

Sutra:

“A spiritual light coalesced inside and transformed my thoughts of excessive lust into the fire of wisdom. After that, when any of the Buddhas summoned me, they used the name ‘fire-head.’

Commentary:

“I contemplated the fire in my body, and after a long time I came to abhor it and to be alarmed about it. Once I became alarmed, I no longer liked the thoughts of desire, and I gradually did away with them. Once they were gone, **a spiritual light coalesced inside.**” He produced his own light, **“and transformed my thoughts of excessive lust into the fire of wisdom.”** A change took place in his obsessive thoughts of desire: they turned into fiery wisdom. **“After that, when any of the Buddhas summoned me, they used the name ‘fire-head.’”** They called him “Fire-head Vajra” (*huo tou jin gang* 火頭金剛).

Sutra:

“From the strength of the fire-light samadhi, I accomplished Arhatship. I made a great vow that when each of the Buddhas accomplishes the way, I will be a powerful knight and in person subdue the demons’ hatred.

Commentary:

When each of the thousand Buddhas of the Worthy Aeon accomplishes the Way, I will be a powerful and great Vajra Lord – a big Dharma Protector – and tame all the demons and enemies.”

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I used attentive contemplation of the effects of heat in my body and mind, until it became unobstructed and penetrating and all my outflows were consumed. I produced a blazing brilliance and ascended to enlightenment. This is the foremost method.”

Commentary:

"**The Buddha asks** each of his disciples **about perfect penetration. I used attentive contemplation of the effects of heat in my body and mind, until it became unobstructed and penetrating and all my outflows were consumed.** The effects of heat were turned into the fire of wisdom, and my inherent nature within was unhindered and flowed freely. It burned away all my outflows, and **I produced a blazing brilliance and ascended to enlightenment. This is the foremost method."**

N2 Maintaining the Ground Bodhisattva: the earth element.

Sutra:

The Bodhisattva, "Maintaining the Ground," arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I remember when Universal Light Thus Come One appeared in the world in the past. I was a Bhikshu who continually worked on making level the major roads, ferry-landings, and the dangerous spots in the ground, where the disrepair might hinder or harm carriages or horses. I did everything from building bridges to hauling sand.

Commentary:

The Bodhisattva, "Maintaining the Ground," arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I remember when Universal Light Thus Come One appeared in the world in the past. I was a Bhikshu who continually worked on making level the major roads, ferry-landings. When Universal Light Thus Come One was in the world, I left the home life and was a bhikshu who repaired highways." "Ferry landings" here includes a reference to fords – to places where small streams crossed the path. He would place a piece of wood across to make it easy for people to pass by. He also repaired **dangerous spots in the ground.** Sometimes the earth would be rutted or bumpy, not flat and broad. These were cases of disrepair, which means the path was impassable. The disrepair **might hinder or harm carriages or**

horses. I worked on making these kinds of roadways level. If there were ruts and potholes, I filled them. If there were bumps I smoothed them out. I made the roads even. **I did everything from building bridges to hauling sand.**

Sutra:

"I was diligent in this hard labor throughout the appearance of limitless Buddhas in the world. If there were beings at the walls and gates of the cities who needed someone to carry their goods, I would carry them all the way to their destination, set the things down, and leave without taking any recompense.

Commentary:

"I was diligent in this hard labor throughout the appearance of limitless Buddhas in the world." "This hard labor" refers to such tasks as hauling sand and building bridges. He continued to do this kind of work during life after life. "**If there were beings at the walls and gates of the cities who needed someone to carry their goods, I would carry them all the way to their destination.** If there were peddlers along the walls and gates of the cities who sold goods that needed to be hauled, I would haul them, either balancing the load on my head or back, or carrying it in my arms. When I got where they wanted to go, I would **set the things down, and leave.** I would unload the materials they bought and go on my way **without taking any recompense.**" That means that he would not only not ask for or expect money, but he would refuse it if it was offered. This is the kind of ascetic practice that Maintaining the Ground Bodhisattva practices.

Sutra:

"When the Buddha Vipashyin appeared in the world, there was a world-wide famine. I would carry people on my back, and no matter how far the distance, I would only accept one small coin. If there was an ox-cart stuck in the mud, I would use my spiritual strength to push the wheels and get it out of difficulty.

Commentary:

"When the Buddha Vipashyin appeared in the world, there was a world-wide famine." No one had anything to eat. "Vipashyin" means "Pervading Everywhere with Ease"[1]. As the famine spread, people would evacuate areas en masse, trying to get out of the stricken places. Some people in the exodus could not walk, and so Maintaining the Earth Bodhisattva would carry them. **"I would carry people on my back, and no matter how far the distance, I would only accept one small coin."** Whether it was a short trip, or a long journey, he always took the same amount of money – one small coin. I didn't want any more. **If there was an ox-cart stuck in the mud, I would use my spiritual strength to push the wheels and get it out of difficulty."** When it rained a lot, the water would stand in the roads and the mud would become so thick it was not easy for people to walk. When a cart tried to pass, it would get bogged down. Maintaining the Ground Bodhisattva said that he had great strength – a spiritual force, and so he would push the wheels and pull the cart out of its predicament.

Sutra:

"Once a king asked the Buddha to accept a vegetarian feast. At that time, I served the Buddha by leveling the road as he went. Vipashyin Thus Come One rubbed my crown and said, 'You should level your mind-ground, then everything else in the world would be level.'

Commentary:

"Once a king asked the Buddha to accept a vegetarian feast." The King of the country was a faithful follower of the Buddha, and he invited the Buddha to accept a vegetarian offering. **"At that time, I served the Buddha by leveling the road as he went.** On the road the Buddha traveled, I smoothed out all the uneven places as he went along. **Vipashyin Thus Come One rubbed my crown and said, 'You should level your mind-**

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1. *bian yi qie zi zai* 遍一切自在

ground, then everything else in the world would be level.'" When the mind-ground is even, all the other ground in the world will be even quite naturally. Maintaining the Ground Bodhisattva had worked for such a long time at leveling the earth, which was fundamentally level to begin with. But he had been leveling things physically, while the ground of his own nature was not yet level. Vipashyin Thus Come One told him to level the ground of his own mind, for once he had done that, all other ground would be level as well. The mind-ground just means the ground of one's own nature.

Sutra:

"Immediately my mind opened up and I saw that the particles of earth composing my own body were no different from all the particles of earth that made up the world. The nature of those particles of dust was such that they did not connect with one another nor could they be touched by the blade of a sword.

Commentary:

"When I heard Vipashyin explain this Dharma door, **immediately my mind opened up.** I became enlightened, **and I saw that the particles of earth composing my own body were no different from all the particles of earth that made up the world.** My body was made of particles of dust, nothing more, and they were the same as the particles of dust that composed everything else in the world. **The nature of those particles of dust was such that they did not connect with one another.** They did not come in contact one with another. **Nor could they be touched by the blade of a sword.** Even the stroke of a sword could not disrupt them, and so could not harm my body, because my body was the same as emptiness. I had no appearance of self."

Sutra:

"Within the dharma-nature I awakened to the patience with the non-production of dharmas and accomplished Arhatship. I brought my mind back, to the extent that I have now entered the ranks of the Bodhisattvas. Hearing the Thus Come One

proclaim the Wonderful Lotus Flower, the level of the Buddha's knowledge and vision, I have already been certified as having understood and am a leader in the assembly.

Commentary:

"**Within the dharma-nature I awakened to the patience with the non-production of dharmas and accomplished Arhatship. I brought my mind back:** I turned from the Small and returned to the Great, **to the extent that I have now entered the ranks of the Bodhisattvas. Hearing the Thus Come One proclaim the Wonderful Lotus Flower,** that is, the Great Shurangama Samadhi, that subtle, wonderful Dharma, **the level of the Buddha's knowledge and vision, I have already been certified as having understood and am a leader in the assembly.** I can testify to this Dharma-door."

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. Upon attentive contemplation of the body and the environment, I saw that these two dusts are exactly the same – that, fundamentally, everything is the Treasury of the Thus Come One, but that an empty falseness arises and creates the dust. When the dust is eliminated, wisdom is perfected, and one accomplishes the unsurpassed Way. This is the foremost method."

Commentary:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. Upon attentive contemplation of the body and the environment, I saw that these two dusts are exactly the same. There is no difference between the body and mind and the world. I saw **that, fundamentally, everything is the Treasury of the Thus Come One, but that an empty falseness arises and creates the dust.** Within the illusory falseness? defilement grows. **When the dust is eliminated, wisdom is perfected, and one accomplishes the unsurpassed Way. This is the foremost method."**

N3 Moonlight Bodhisattva: the water element.

Sutra:

The Pure Youth Moonlight arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I remember that long ago, beyond kalpas as many as there are sands in the Ganges, there was a Buddha in the world named Water-God, who taught all the Bodhisattvas to cultivate the contemplation of water and enter samadhi.

Commentary:

The Pure Youth Moonlight entered the Way as a virgin youth. He left the home-life when he was quite young. As he speaks now, however, he was not a youth; he was an elder among the Bodhisattvas. People referred to him as "Pure Youth" because he entered the Way when he was young and undefiled. He **arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I remember that long ago, beyond kalpas as many as there are sands in the Ganges, there was a Buddha in the world named Water-God, who taught all the Bodhisattvas to cultivate the contemplation of water and enter samadhi.** He practiced the samadhi of water-contemplation.

Sutra:

"I reflected upon how throughout the body the essence of water is not in discord. I started with mucus and saliva and went on through digestive juices, phlegm, semen, blood, to urine and excrement. As it revolved through my body, the nature of water was identical. I saw that the water in my body was not at all different from that in the world outside: even that in royal lands of floating banners with all their seas of fragrant waters.

Commentary:

"I reflected upon how throughout the body the essence of water is not in discord. It does not contend with itself. **I started with mucus and saliva and went on through –** investigating each

in detail – **digestive juices,** which lie below the throat; **phlegm,** which lies above the throat; **semen, blood, to urine and excrement. As it revolved through my body, the nature of water was identical.** It circulated throughout my body, ending and beginning continually as it revolved. Throughout it all, the essence of water remained the same. **I saw that the water in my body was not at all different from that in the world outside: even that in royal lands of floating banners with all their seas of fragrant waters.”** The “royal lands of floating banners” refers to the base of Mount Sumeru. All these kinds of water were the same. There was no distinction to be made among them.

Sutra:

“At that time, when I first succeeded in the contemplation of water, I could see only water. I still had not gotten beyond my physical body.

Commentary:

“**At that time, when I first succeeded in the contemplation of water, I could see only water.** All the waters in my body were united as one, and the water of my body and the water of the external environment were also joined. But, **I still had not gotten beyond my physical body.** I still had a body. I hadn’t experienced the state of having no body.”

Sutra:

“I was a Bhikshu then, and once when I was in dhyana repose in my room, a disciple of mine peeked in the window and saw only pure water there, which filled the entire room. He saw nothing else.

Commentary:

“**I was a Bhikshu then, and once when I was in dhyana repose in my room –** I was in a quiet room sitting in dhyana cultivating the water-contemplation samadhi – **a disciple of mine peeked in the window and saw only pure water there, which filled the entire room. He saw nothing else.**” This youth swept the

walks, cleaned up the place, cooked the food, and in general, served this bhikshu. "He looked in my window that day and saw nothing but clear water filling UP the entire room. There wasn't anything else in there at all."

Sutra:

"The lad was young, and not knowing any better, he picked up a tile and tossed it into the water. It hit the water with a 'plunk.' He gazed around and then left. When I came out of concentration, I was suddenly aware of a pain in my heart, and I felt like Shariputra must have felt when he met that cruel ghost.

Commentary:

"**The lad was young, and not knowing any better, he picked up a tile and tossed it into the water.** The disciple was a young child and didn't have much sense. He found a little square of tile and threw it in the window into the water. **It hit the water with a 'plunk.' He gazed around and then left.**" The child stood there peering in and wondering, "My teacher's in that room meditating. Why is the whole place full of water?" Then he threw a stone into the water, looked all around, and left. **When I came out of concentration, I was suddenly aware of a pain in my heart, and I felt like Shariputra must have felt when he met that cruel ghost.**"

The Pure Youth Moonlight is referring to the time when Shariputra was meditating, and a couple of ghosts passed by in the air. One was named "Unreasonably Cruel," and the other was named "Repeatedly Cruel." Repeatedly said to Unreasonably, "How about if I hit that Shramana over the head – the one that's there meditating?"

Unreasonably said, "Don't! You don't want to hit a Shramana. Better not mess with a cultivator of the Way."

After he left, Repeatedly did not heed his advice; He took a bludgeon and whacked Shariputra over the head with it. When Shariputra came out of samadhi, he had a headache. He thought,

"I've already been certified to the fruition of Arhatship, and I haven't any illness, so why does my head ache?" So he went to ask the Buddha about it.

"You were struck by the ghost called Repeatedly Cruel," the Buddha answered, "and as a result of what he did to you, he has already fallen into the unintermittent hells – the Avicis. The blow he dealt you was so powerful it could have split Mount Sumeru in half, had it been aimed in that direction. Fortunately, you have strong samadhi power. Otherwise you would have been smashed to smithereens." That's how Shariputra got a headache. Now the disciple of the Pure Youth Moonlight threw a tile in the water of his samadhi, and when he came out of samadhi, his heart hurt.

Sutra:

"I thought to myself, 'I am already an Arhat and have long since abandoned conditions that bring on illness. Why is it that today I suddenly have a pain in my heart? Am I about to lose the position of non-retreat?'

Commentary:

The Bodhisattva Moonlight **thought to** himself, "**I am already an Arhat and have long since abandoned conditions that bring on illness.** I shouldn't get sick, so **why is it that today I suddenly have a pain in my heart? Am I about to lose the position of non-retreat?** Am I losing the position of Arhatship I have gained? Am I retreating from my resolve for the Way?"

Sutra:

"Just then, the young lad came promptly to me and related what had happened. I quickly said to him, 'When you see the water again, you may open the door, wade into the water, and remove the tile.' The child was obedient, so that when I re-entered samadhi, he again saw the water and the tile as well. He opened the door and took it out. When I came out of concentration, my body was as it had been before.

Commentary:

"**Just then, the young lad came promptly to me and related what had happened. I quickly said to him, 'When you see the water again, you may open the door, wade into the water, and remove the tile.' The child was obedient, so that when I re-entered samadhi, he again saw the water and the tile as well.** The Pure Youth Moonlight entered into samadhi once more, and the youth saw water in the room again, and he could also see the tile in it. **He opened the door and took it out.** He came in and removed the tile. **When I came out of concentration, my body was as it had been before.** My heart didn't hurt anymore."

Sutra:

"I encountered limitless Buddhas and cultivated in this way until the coming of the Thus Come One, King of Masterful Penetrations of Mountains and Seas. Then I finally had no body. My nature and the seas of fragrant waters throughout the ten directions were identical with True Emptiness, without any duality or difference. Now I am with the Thus Come One and am known as a Pure Youth, and I have joined the assembly of Bodhisattvas.

Commentary:

"**I encountered limitless Buddhas and cultivated in this way until the coming of the Thus Come One, King of Masterful Penetrations of Mountains and Seas.** I cultivated the contemplation of water in this fashion under limitless, boundless Thus Come Ones. When the Buddha called King of Masterful Penetrations of Mountains and Seas entered the world, **I finally had no body.** At that point in my cultivation of the contemplation of water, the waters outside and the waters within my body united, and my own body disappeared. **My nature and the seas of fragrant waters throughout the ten directions were identical with True Emptiness, without any duality or difference.**" When he succeeded in his cultivation of the Great Water Contemplation Samadhi, he became one with all the bodies of water. "**Now I am**

with the Thus Come One and am known as a Pure Youth, and I have joined the assembly of Bodhisattvas. Now, in the presence of Shakyamuni Buddha, I am known as a Pure Youth and am part of the Bodhisattva assembly."

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. By means of the nature of water, I penetrated through to the flow of a single flavor, and I obtained patience with the non-production of dharmas and the perfection of Bodhi. This is the foremost method."

Commentary:

"Now **the Buddha asks** all his disciples about the Dharma-door of **perfect penetration** which they obtained. **By means of the nature of water, I penetrated through to the flow of a single flavor.** I used the contemplation of water – of the essence of water – to find the single flavor of water that flows through everything. **I obtained patience with the non-production of dharmas and the perfection of Bodhi. This is the foremost method.** In my opinion, the contemplation of water is the best Dharma-door."

N4 Vaidurya Bodhisattva: the wind element.

Sutra:

The Dharma Prince Vaidurya Light arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I can still remember back through aeons as many as the sands in the Ganges to the time of a Buddha named 'Limitless Sound,' who instructed the Bodhisattvas that fundamental enlightenment is wonderful and bright. He taught them to contemplate this world and all the beings in it as false conditions propelled by the power of wind.

Commentary:

The Dharma Prince Vaidurya Light: "Vaidurya" is a blue gemstone. "Dharma Prince" is a title given to Bodhisattvas. He

arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I can still remember back through aeons as many as the sands in the Ganges to the time of a Buddha named 'Limitless Sound.' The Buddha called Limitless Sound **instructed the Bodhisattvas that fundamental enlightenment is wonderful and bright. He taught them to contemplate this world and all the beings in it as false conditions propelled by the power of wind."** The Dharma Prince Vaidurya Light accomplished his deeds in the Way through the element wind.

Sutra:

"At that time, I contemplated the position of the world, and I regarded the passage of time in the world. I reflected on the movement and stillness in my body. I considered the arising of thoughts in the mind. All these kinds of movement were non-dual; they were equal and the same.

Commentary:

"**At that time, I contemplated the position of the world,** that is, how the world-system was established. **I regarded the passage of time in the world.** I looked into the course of past, present, and future. **I reflected on the movement and stillness in my body. I considered the arising of thoughts in the mind.**" As soon as we give rise to thought, we have created wind within our minds. Once there is wind in our minds, the many kinds of external winds arise. "**All these kinds of movement were non-dual.** The substance and appearance of all the various movements are **equal and the same**. There is no distinction to be made among them."

Sutra:

"I then understood that the nature of movement does not come from anywhere and does not go anywhere. Every single material particle throughout the ten directions and every upside-down living being in it is of the same empty falseness.

Commentary:

"I then understood that the nature of movement does not come from anywhere and does not go anywhere. At that time I comprehended the essence of movement. **Every single material particle throughout the ten directions and every upside-down living being in it is of the same empty falseness.** They are all empty and false, created from one identical illusion.

Sutra:

"And so, throughout the three-thousand-great-thousand worlds, the living beings in each of the worlds were like so many mosquitoes confined in a trap and droning monotonously. Caught in those few square inches, their hum built to a maddening crescendo. Not long after I encountered the Buddha, I attained patience with the non-production of dharmas.

Commentary:

And so, throughout the three-thousand-great-thousand worlds – so it goes, from one world to a small-thousands of worlds, on through a thousand small-thousands of worlds – that is, a middle-thousands of world-systems – and on through a thousand middle-thousands of worlds, which makes a great thousands of worlds. All through the three-thousand-great-thousand worlds, **the living beings in each of the worlds were like so many mosquitoes confined in a trap and droning monotonously.** They were like a great mass o£ mosquitoes trapped in a vessel. Each mosquito in the container emitted its own sound. **Caught in those few square inches, their hum built to a maddening crescendo.** Inside such a small space, their droning reverberated madly. I contemplated in this way, and **not long after I encountered the Buddha, I attained patience with the non-production of dharmas.**"

Sutra:

"My mind then opened, and I could see the country of the Buddha, 'Unmoving,' in the east. I became a Dharma Prince and served the Buddhas of the ten directions. My body and mind emit a light that make them completely clear and translucent.

Commentary:

"**My mind then opened, and I could see the country of the Buddha, 'Unmoving,' in the east.** I worked at perfecting this skill for a long time with a concentrated mind, allowing no other false thoughts to enter. Eventually I became enlightened, my mind opened, and I could see Akshobhya Medicine Master Buddha, in the east." He is known as the Buddha Unmoving and also as the Vajra Buddha. **I became a Dharma Prince** at that place, **and served the Buddhas of the ten directions. My body and mind emit a light that make them completely clear and translucent.** I kept cultivating until my mind had light and my body had light. It penetrated within and without and was totally unhindered."

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I contemplated the power of wind as lacking anything to rely on, and I awakened to the Bodhi-mind. I entered samadhi and meshed with the single, wonderful mind transmitted by all the Buddhas of the ten directions. This is the foremost method."

Commentary:

"**The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I contemplated the power of wind as lacking anything to rely on.** That is, the wind has no substantial nature of its own – it has no self-nature. From this **I awakened to the Bodhi-mind. I entered samadhi and meshed with the single, wonderful mind transmitted by all the Buddhas of the ten directions.** I received the transmission of the Buddha's mind-seal Dharmadoor. **This is the foremost method.** The Dharma-door of contemplating the

unmoving power of wind is the best way, I think. I accomplished my Way-karma by contemplating the element wind."

N5 Treasury of Emptiness Bodhisattva: the emptiness element.

Sutra:

Treasury of Emptiness Bodhisattva arose from his seat, bowed to the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "The Thus Come One and I attained boundless bodies at the place of the Buddha, 'Samadhi-Light.'

Commentary:

Treasury of Emptiness Bodhisattva accomplished the Way by means of the element emptiness, which is one of the seven elements discussed previously. Now he relates how in the past he cultivated the method of the contemplation of emptiness. He **arose from his seat, bowed to the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "The Thus Come One and I attained boundless bodies at the place of the Buddha, 'Samadhi-Light.'**. "Thus Come One" refers to Shakyamuni Buddha. Treasury of Emptiness Bodhisattva says his body was like empty space – boundless in its measure. "Samadhi-Light Buddha" refers to Burning Lamp Buddha. During the second great asamkhyeya of Shakyamuni Buddha's cultivation, Burning Lamp Buddha bestowed upon him a prediction of Buddhahood.

Sutra:

"At that time, I held in my hands four huge precious pearls, which shone on Buddhalands as many as the motes of dust in the ten directions and transformed them into emptiness.

Commentary:

"At that time," after Treasury of Emptiness Bodhisattva had attained a boundless body, he **"held in** his **hands four huge precious pearls, which shone on Buddhalands as many as the motes of dust in the ten directions and transformed them into emptiness."** This occurred in innumerable Buddhalands as' numerous as fine particles of dust.

Sutra:

"In my mind there appeared a great, perfect mirror, which emitted from within ten kinds of subtle, wonderful precious light that poured out into the ten directions to the farthest bounds of emptiness.

Commentary:

Treasury of Emptiness, from within his everlasting, true **mind**, found that **there appeared a great, perfect mirror.** This mirror represents great wisdom. When the eighth consciousness is turned around, it becomes the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom. "It **emitted from within ten kinds of subtle, wonderful precious light that poured out into the ten directions to the farthest bounds of emptiness.** The light was magnificent as it flowed out into all of emptiness throughout the ten directions."

Sutra:

"All the royal lands of banners came into the mirror and passed into my body. There was no hindrance to this interaction, because my body was like emptiness.

Commentary:

"All the royal lands of banners" – that is, all the Buddhalands **– "came into the mirror and passed into my body."** He gathered into the mirror all the Buddhalands in the ten directions of emptiness throughout the Dharmarealm. Once they were in the mirror, they went on into this body. **"There was no hindrance to this interaction, because my body was like emptiness."** His body was emptiness itself, and emptiness was his body. There was absolutely no difference between his body and emptiness.

Sutra:

"My body could enter with ease as many countries as there are fine motes of dust and could do the Buddha's work on a wide scale, because it had become completely compliant.

Commentary:

Treasury of Emptiness Bodhisattva realized that his body was just emptiness, and emptiness was his body. Therefore, there was no boundary that could be distinguished between the two, and so there was no obstruction between them, either. They were fused. From that point on, **"My body could enter with ease as many countries as there are fine motes of dust and could do the Buddha's work on a wide scale, because it had become completely compliant."** His body could pervade that many lands. What did he do when he got to all those places? He helped the Buddhas. How did he do that? He turned all mundane activities into deeds for the Buddha. His having become "completely compliant" means that he had achieved the greatest degree of ability to accord with living beings.

Sutra:

"I achieved this great spiritual power from contemplating in detail how the four elements lack anything to return to; how the production and extinction of false thoughts is no different from emptiness; how all the Buddhalands are basically the same. Once I realized this identity, I obtained patience with the non-production of Dharmas.

Commentary:

"**I achieved this great spiritual power –** the spiritual ability to accord with living beings **– from contemplating in detail how the four elements lack anything to return to** I studied and reflected on this in detail: the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water, have no substance; they are not based in anything. I realized that **the production and extinction of false thoughts is no different from emptiness.** False thoughts give rise to production and extinction: once I reflected on that, my body became no different from emptiness itself. Even **all the Buddhalands are basically the same.**" "The same" means that they, too, fundamentally are emptiness. He was a Treasury of Emptiness and found every-thing to be empty. He turned everything into empty space, including the

places where there were Buddhalands and the places where there weren't. "**Once I realized this identity, I obtained patience with the non-production of Dharmas.** I made this discovery about emptiness, and it brought me this kind of patience."

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I used the contemplation of the boundlessness of emptiness to enter samadhi and attain wonderful power and perfect clarity. This is the foremost method."

Commentary:

"**The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I used the** power of the **contemplation of the boundlessness of emptiness.** Since emptiness had no bounds, my body also became boundless. From contemplating emptiness I entered a kind of **samadhi –** the concentration-power of emptiness – and attained **wonderful power and perfect clarity.** This emptiness-samadhi was extremely magnificent. The power of it was totally complete and full of light. **This is the foremost method.** As for what I, Treasury of Emptiness Bodhisattva, have cultivated, the Dharma-door of contemplating emptiness is the most wonderful."

N6 Maitreya Bodhisattva: the element consciousness.
O1 First tells about his experience at the time of a Buddha of antiquity.

Sutra:

Maitreya Bodhisattva arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I remember when, as many kalpas ago as there are fine motes of dust, a Buddha named Light of Sun, Moon, and Lamp appeared in the world. Under that Buddha I left the home life; yet I was deeply committed to worldly fame and liked to fraternize with people of good family.

Commentary:

Maitreya Bodhisattva is also Ajita. Maitreya is his family name, Ajita his given name. Maitreya means "Compassionate

Clan"[1]; Ajita means "invincible"[2]. Perhaps you have seen images of a fat monk in the dining hall in Buddhist temples. Maitreya is that monk. Maybe this Bodhisattva liked to eat good things and got fat that way. He also liked to laugh, but his laugh was not a coarse "Ha! Ha! Ha!" Rather, he always had a big smile on his face. He enjoyed playing with children, and so the children were all fond of him in turn. He was always surrounded by them. After Shakyamuni Buddha retires as the Teaching Host of this world, Maitreya Bodhisattva will take over the position. Shakyamuni Buddha is known as the Red-Yang Buddha. When Maitreya Bodhisattva becomes a Buddha, he will be the White-Yang Buddha. This means that when Maitreya Bodhisattva comes to the world as a Buddha, people's blood will be white, not red. People are red-blooded now because of the Red-Yang Buddha.

When will Maitreya Bodhisattva come into the world? It sounds like a long time when you describe it, but it is not actually so long, because from a Bodhisattva's point of view it is but the blink of an eye. How long a time will it be? At present, people's average life-span is about sixty years. Every hundred years people's lifespan decreases one year and their average height decreases one inch. When these have decreased to the point that people's lifespan is around thirty years, there will be a pestilence. People will die very quickly from the disease, even to the point that they will be dead an hour after they contract it. One may call for a doctor, but the doctor will die along with the rest. Fifty percent of the entire population will succumb to the disease. When the lifespan of the remaining fifty percent reaches twenty-five years, there will be another calamity. Why must these people die? Because by that time, people's minds will be thoroughly decadent. There will be too many bad people, so heaven and earth will have to eliminate these incorrigibles. They will be unacceptable and will have to be traded in for better ones. In the first plague, then, fifty percent of the

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1. *ci shi* 慈氏
2. *wu neng sheng* 無能勝

people will die. When the average life-span has declined to twenty-five years, there will be a devastating fire. Not only will people all over the earth be burned, but even those in the First Dhyana Heavens will perish.

Fire burns the first dhyana.

All over the world the seas will be burned dry. Uncountable people will die in the fire. Even so, some people will escape the holocaust. When the lifespan of the remaining people reaches about twenty years, there will be a disaster of water.

Water drowns the second dhyana.

When the lifespan of those who are left is just about twenty, there will be a disaster of wind, which will blow through the Third Dhyana Heaven.

Wind rips up the third dhyana.

So it is said,

In the Six Desire Heavens
are the Five Signs of Decay;
Above, in the Third Dhyana Heavens
is the disaster of wind.
Even if people cultivate and reach
the Heaven of Neither Thought Nor Non-Thought,
It's not as good as going to the Western Land,
and coming back again.

The Six Desire Heavens are the ones we see overhead; the Heaven of the Four Kings, the Trayastrimsha Heaven, the Suyama Heaven, the Tushita Heaven, the Heaven of the Bliss from Transformations, and the Heaven of the Comfort Gained from Others' Transformations. Beings in these Six Desire Heavens have to endure the Five Signs of Decay:

1) Their floral crowns wilt. The heavenly beings are crowned with flowers. They do not make the crowns; the crowns naturally appear to adorn them. But when the gods are about to die, what do you suppose happens? The flowers fall. Before a heavenly being's time comes to die, the flowers remain ever-fresh.

2) Their clothes get dirty. The clothes worn by the gods and goddesses don't need to be washed, unlike the clothes we people wear, which must be washed after being worn just once. The heavenly beings' clothes don't get dirty until the five signs of decay appear. This is the result of karmic retribution. The filth on their clothing comes from their karmic obstacles. Why do some people smell very bad when they are on the verge of death? Some smell bad even before it's time to die. That is also a result of karma.

3) Their armpits sweat. The gods don't perspire like people do. They never sweat, until they are on the verge of dying.

4) Their entire bodies smell. Ordinarily, the heavenly beings emit a sweet fragrance from their person. When they are about to die, however, they smell bad. Usually, though, they don't have to douse themselves with perfume, because they naturally smell good.

5) They cannot sit still. They can no longer sit like they used to. They keep restlessly getting up and down as if they were crazy. In the midst of this flurry, they get confused, and as soon as that happens, they die. They fall into this world.

Once the three disasters are over, people's lifespan will decrease to ten years. At that time, people will only reach the height of the dogs of the present day. They will be completely corrupt and act just like horses, cows, and pigs, in that they will have desire from the moment they are born. They will also be able to speak as soon as they are born. They will be capable of sexual desire because,

People's nature flows into emotion;
Emotion flows into desire.

By that time, people will have totally abandoned themselves to desire. They will marry by the time they are two or three years old, have children, and die by the time they are ten years old. But when the lifespan of people reaches only ten years, an increase will begin. The proportions will be the same: in every century a year will be added to their lifespan and an inch to their average height. It will increase until the lifespan of people reaches 84,000 years. Then a decrease will begin again, and when the lifespan has decreased to 80,000 years, Maitreya Bodhisattva will come into the world and accomplish Buddhahood. Some religious sects say that Maitreya Bodhisattva has already come to become a Buddha. These are words spoken in a dream; basically, those people don't understand the Buddhadharma. Maitreya's coming will happen in a certain way; you can't just explain it any old way.

When Maitreya Bodhisattva was cultivating the Way, he was always seeking advantage from situations – "climbing on conditions" as it's said in Chinese. He was always hobnobbing and fraternizing with the rich. So although he and Shakyamuni Buddha cultivated together at the same time Maitreya Bodhisattva didn't become a Buddha as quickly as Shakyamuni Buddha did, since he was always climbing on conditions. I certainly believe that he liked to take advantage of situations; how else would he have gotten so fat? He's fat because he liked to eat good food; he didn't get that way just by laughing.

He **arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I remember when, as many kalpas ago as there are fine motes of dust, a Buddha named Light of Sun, Moon, and Lamp appeared in the world. Under that Buddha I left the home life; yet I was deeply committed to worldly fame and liked to fraternize with people of good family.** I was intent on getting a good reputation.**"** "People of good family" refers to large families with lots of money. Every country has its wealthy people, and wherever Maitreya Bodhisattva went he paid no attention to the poor, but went to the homes of the rich to exchange greetings and

flatter them. Everywhere he went he also advertised for himself. He was phony this way when he first started to cultivate.

But you shouldn't think of Maitreya Bodhisattva as someone who climbs on conditions, because he eventually stopped doing it. The next passage refers to the time when he had already stopped.

O2 He teaches him to cultivate the samadhi of consciousness.

Sutra:

"Then the World Honored One taught me to cultivate consciousness-only concentration, and I entered that samadhi. For many aeons I have made use of that samadhi as I performed deeds for as many Buddhas as there are sands in the Ganges. My seeking for worldly name and fame ceased completely and never recurred.

Commentary:

At present our desire to climb on conditions and take advantage of situations had not ceased. Maitreya Bodhisattva's ceased long ago. He should study the way in which he stopped climbing on conditions instead of imitating his former bad habits. "**Then the World Honored One,** that is the Buddha Light of Sun, Moon, and Lamp, taught me to **cultivate consciousness-only concentration**.

The three realms come only from the mind
The myriad dharmas arise only from consciousness

That is the principle of the Consciousness-only Concentration.

"**I entered that samadhi,** and **for many aeons I have made use of that samadhi as I performed deeds for as many Buddhas as there are sands in the Ganges.** I made offerings to as many Buddhas as there are fine grains of sand in the Ganges River. **My seeking for worldly name and fame ceased completely and never recurred.** Both my desire to be famous and my habit of catering to the rich and well-born are all gone now. Now I don't climb on conditions and I don't seek name or profit.

O3 Later on his samadhi accomplished, he received a prediction.

Sutra:

"When Burning Lamp Buddha appeared in the world, I finally accomplished the unsurpassed, wonderfully perfect Samadhi of Consciousness.

Commentary:

Maitreya Bodhisattva says, **"When Burning Lamp Buddha appeared in the world, I finally accomplished the unsurpassed, wonderfully perfect Samadhi of Consciousness."** He realized in person a perfect penetration that was supremely subtle – the concentration power of the mind-consciousness.

Sutra:

"I went on until, to the ends of emptiness, all the lands of the Thus Come One, whether pure or defiled, existent or non-existent, were transformations appearing from within my own mind.

"**I went on until, to the ends of emptiness, all the lands of the Thus Come One, whether pure or defiled, existent or non-existent, were transformations appearing from within my own mind.** Even the disappearance of emptiness and the pure lands of the Thus Come Ones, as well as the impure ones, came from my own mind." They were transformations of Maitreya Bodhisattva's Consciousness Samadhi.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, because I understand consciousness only thus, the nature of consciousness reveals limitless Thus Come Ones. Now I have received the prediction that I will be the next to take the Buddha's place.

Commentary:

Maitreya Bodhisattva addressed Shakyamuni Buddha, "**World Honored One, because I understand consciousness only thus –** the doctrine explained above – **the nature of consciousness**

reveals – as transformations of the mind-consciousness – **limitless Thus Come Ones.** It manifests countless Buddhas. **Now I have received the prediction that I will be the next to take the Buddha's place.** I have received a prediction of Buddhahood, and in the future, when Shakyamuni Buddha retires, I will come to the Saha World and become a Buddha."

O4 He concludes his answer by telling how he was certified to perfect penetration.

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I was intent upon the contemplation that the ten directions come only from consciousness. When the conscious mind is perfect and bright, one enters the perfection of the real. One leaves behind reliance on others and attachment to incessant calculating and attains the patience with the non-production of dharmas. This is the foremost method."

Commentary:

"**The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I was intent upon the contemplation that the ten directions come only from consciousness.** Everything in the ten directions is created from the conscious mind. **When the conscious mind is perfect and bright, one enters the perfection of the real.**" This means wisdom. "**One leaves behind** the aspect of the nature which involves **reliance on others**, and that nature's **incessant calculating and attains the patience with the non-production of dharmas. This is the foremost method.**"

There are three aspects of the nature:

1) Reliance on Others;
2) Incessant Calculating;
3) Perfection of the Real.

From the perfection of the real, people give rise to reliance on others and then to incessant calculating. As an analogy, we can say that the perfection of the real nature is like hemp. The aspect which

involves reliance on others is like the hemp when seen as a rope. The incessant calculating of the nature is to see the rope as a snake. For instance, at night someone might see a rope made of hemp and mistake it for a snake and become frightened. That would be the function of his incessant calculating, which mistook a rope for a snake and reacted to it. He became attached to the idea that it was a snake when, in fact, it wasn't. When he realizes it is a rope, he has recognized his nature that involves reliance on others. When he figures out what the rope is made of, then he's gotten back to the perfection of the real nature. He sees it for what it really is. When Maitreya Bodhisattva cultivated the concentration of consciousness-only, he became enlightened. In this passage he refers to the three aspects of the nature when he says, "One enters the perfection of the real" and "leaves behind reliance on others and incessant calculating."

N7 Great Strength Bodhisattva: the element of perception.
O1 He tells how he was transmitted the dharma by a Buddha of old.

Sutra:

Dharma Prince, Great Strength, together with fifty-two Bodhisattvas of similar rank, arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha:

Commentary:

Dharma Prince, Great Strength, and Gwan Yin Bodhisattva were sons of Amitabha Buddha when he was a wheel-turning king in a past life. Once Amitabha Buddha accomplished Buddhahood, these two Bodhisattvas served him. They are his daily companions – one on his left, one on his right. When Amitabha Buddha retires as teaching host of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, in the first half of the night, the Dharma will become extinct, and in the second half of the same night, Gwan Yin Bodhisattva will accomplish Buddhahood there in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. When Gwan Yin Bodhisattva retires as the resident Buddha of the Western Land, Great Strength Bodhisattva will become a Buddha in the same way that Gwan Yin Bodhisattva did, there in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Great Strength Bodhisattva is also known as Attained Great Strength[1]. He is so powerful that if he raises his hand, moves his foot, or moves his head, the great earth quakes and trembles. When he walks about, the earth shakes. “Dharma Prince” means Bodhisattva.

Together with fifty-two Bodhisattvas of similar rank, arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha. These fifty-two Bodhisattvas represent the Ten Faiths, the Ten Dwellings, the Ten Practices, the Ten Transferences, the Ten Grounds, and the levels of Equal Enlightenment and Wonderful Enlightenment – the Fifty-two Stages of Bodhisattva Practice.

Sutra:

“I remember when, as many aeons ago as there are sands in the Ganges, a Buddha called Limitless Light appeared in the world. In that same aeon there were twelve successive Thus Come Ones; the last was called Light Surpassing the Sun and Moon. That Buddha taught me the Buddha-recitation Samadhi.

Commentary:

“**I remember when, as many aeons ago as there are sands in the Ganges, a Buddha called Limitless Light appeared in the world. In that same aeon there were twelve successive Thus Come Ones; the last was called Light Surpassing the Sun and Moon.** During that one aeon, twelve Buddhas appeared in the world; the twelfth was named Light Surpassing the Sun and Moon. **That Buddha taught me the Buddha-recitation Samadhi.** He taught me to recite ‘Namo Amitabha Buddha.’”

“Amitabha” means “Limitless Light” and “Limitless Life.” The first Buddha of that aeon was named Limitless Light; was it the same Amitabha Buddha we know? Probably not, because the recent Amitabha Buddha accomplished Buddhahood ten kalpas ago. But

1. *de da shi* 得大勢

their names were the same. A lot of Buddhas have the same name, just as we people often have first or last names that are the same.

O2 He brings up an analogy to show the intertwining of the response and the way.
P1 First he uses the analogy of two people.

Sutra:

"Suppose there were a person who always remembers someone else, but the someone else he remembers has entirely forgotten about him. If two such people were to meet, even if they were to see each other, they would not take notice. They would not recognize each other.

Commentary:

Suppose there were a person who always remembers someone else, but the someone else he remembers has entirely forgotten about him. This is an analogy. There are two people, one of whom is always recollecting the other, while the other never remembers the former. Perhaps they are relatives or friends. These two people represent the Buddhas and living beings. The Buddhas are always thinking about us; they are mindful of us living beings, but we living beings never remember the Buddhas. We may happen to study a little of the Buddhadharma, but we're not very clear about what's being said. So we exclaim, "The Buddhadharma is really wonderful:" But we don't know how wonderful it actually is – and that is even more wonderful. Why are the Buddhas mindful of living beings? It is because they see that all living beings are of the same substance. The Buddhas regard all living beings as their past fathers and mothers and as future Buddhas. So the Buddha said, "All living beings on the great earth have the Buddha nature. All can become Buddhas." There's not a single living being who cannot become a Buddha. It is this very point that makes doctrines of Buddhism the most lofty and all-encompassing. That is why the Buddhas advocate not killing, not stealing, not committing sexual misconduct, not lying, and not taking intoxicants. Maintaining these five precepts is a way of showing one's regard for all living creatures. Because the Buddha sees that all living beings are one in

substance with himself, he wants to teach and transform them – to take all living beings across to the accomplishment of Buddhahood.

We living beings come into this world and renounce the roots while we grasp at the branches. We forget the fundamental matters, turn our backs on enlightenment and unite with the "dust" – the wearisome mundane world. That is why we forget the Buddhas and never remember to be mindful of them.

There are several methods in the Dharma door of reciting the Buddha's name:

1) Mindfulness of the Buddha by holding his name. You can recite the name of whichever Buddha you like. For instance, if you like Amitabha Buddha, you can recite Namo Amitabha Buddha. Or perhaps you like to recite Namo Our Original Teacher, Shakyamuni Buddha. Maybe you want to recite Namo Medicine Master Buddha Who Dispels Calamities and Lengthens Life. It's the same with any Buddha throughout the Ten Directions – you can recite any name you wish. The object of being mindful of the Buddha is to consolidate your thoughts into the one thought of mindfulness of the Buddha – to dispense with all other false thoughts. If you don't have extraneous thoughts, you will not give rise to evil thoughts, and when you don't give rise to evil, you are on the road to good.

2) Mindfulness of the Buddha by contemplating. You consider how Amitabha Buddha has a white ray of light that shines between his brows. A line of a verse in his praise says, "His white ray of light curls as high as five Mount Sumerus." The verse goes on, "His violet eyes are as large as the four seas." Can you imagine that!? If you are small minded, then your idea of the Buddha will be fairly small when you consider him. If you have a vast state of mind, then your conception of him can be monumental.

3) Mindfulness of the Buddha by contemplating an image. In this method you look upon an image of Amitabha Buddha while you recite. And as you are mindful of the Buddha, you reflect on his adorned appearance and characteristics.

But, I'll tell you: it can even happen that you become possessed by a demon when being mindful of the Buddha. In general, no matter what practice you do, you must have some virtuous conduct – some virtue in the Way. When I was in Hong Kong at Ta Yu Mountain at Tse Hsing Temple, a bhikshu wanted to do a Standing-Buddha Session. In this practice one stays in one room and walks continually, and so it is called the "continuous walking samadhi" and also the "Standing Buddha samadhi." For ninety days one walks in a room without sitting, lying down, or going to sleep. This is a Dharma door of particular vigor. That bhikshu was being mindful of the Buddha while he practiced this Dharma-door of continuous walking. One day I noticed that the more he recited the louder he became, until he was bellowing, "Namo Amitabha Buddha: Namo Amitabha Buddha:" When I heard him reciting that way, I knew he had entered some state, so I went to take a look. He was running around the room reciting like mad. What had happened? In a past life this bhikshu had been an ox. Since he had performed some merit at a temple by plowing the fields, he had become a monk in this life. However, although he was a monk, his ox-like habits hadn't changed yet. He had a terrific temper. The reason he was running around the room when I found him was that he had seen Amitabha Buddha come, and he was chasing him. What was actually going on? He'd gotten into a demonic state.

It wasn't really Amitabha Buddha who had come, it was a water buffalo that had come up out of the sea. This weird water-buffalo had transformed itself into an appearance of Amitabha Buddha in order to dupe the monk. The monk thought it was Amitabha Buddha who had come, and so he went running after him. When I got there I made use of a Dharma and broke up his demonic state. So sometimes you can even be possessed by demons when reciting the Buddha's name.

4) Mindfulness of the Buddha in his Actual Appearance. This means investigating dhyana. We sit and pursue the topic, "Who is mindful of the Buddha?"

Now in this passage of text, the person who always remembers is the Buddha, and the person who never remembers is we living beings. "**If two such people were to meet, even if they were to see each other, they would not take notice.**" Even if they should encounter each other, it would be just as if they hadn't met. Maybe they see each other at some place or other, but their "lights don't unite," their energies don't interact, because one person remembers but the other one doesn't. They can't get together. Even if they were face to face, it would be as if they were not.

Sutra:

"If two people remember each other until the memory of each is deep, then in life after life they will be together like a form and its shadow, and they will never be at odds.

Commentary:

"**If two people remember each other until the memory of each is deep –** if they remember each other very well **– then in life after life they will be together like a form and its shadow, and they will never be at odds.**" Your shadow follows you everywhere and never leaves you. These two people will be that way and will never be at odds. They will never fail to recognize each other or have a falling out.

P2 Then he uses the analogy of a mother and her child.

Sutra:

"Out of pity for living beings, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions are mindful of them as a mother remembers her child. If the child runs away, of what use is the mother's regard? But if the child remembers his mother in the same way that the mother remembers the child, then in life after life the mother and child will not be far apart.

Commentary:

"**Out of pity for living beings, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions are mindful of them as a mother remembers her**

child. The Buddhas of the ten directions have sympathetic regard for living beings in the same way that a mother has regard for her child. **If the child runs away, of what use is the mother's regard?** Although the mother thinks about him all the time, it's of no benefit. **But if the child remembers his mother in the same way that the mother remembers the child, then in life after life the mother and child will not be far apart.** If they remember each other in the same way, then the mother and child will be together life after life. They won't be separated from each other."

That is to say, if the Buddhas are mindful of us living beings, and if we living beings are also mindful of the Buddhas, then for life after life we will not be separated from them. We will be together.

P3 He connects it with the dharma to show the profound benefit.

Sutra:

"If living beings remember the Buddha and are mindful of the Buddha, certainly they will see the Buddha now or in the future.

Commentary:

If they have a memory of the Buddha and they recite the Buddha's name, it's for sure they can see the Buddha either in this life or in a future life.

Sutra:

"They will never be far from the Buddha, and their minds will awaken by themselves, without the aid of expedients.

Commentary:

They will become enlightened.

Sutra:

"A person who has been near incense will carry a fragrance on his person; it is the same in this case. It is called an adornment of fragrant light.

Commentary:

"**A person who has been near incense will carry a fragrance on his person.** If someone is permeated with the fragrance of incense, a fragrance will linger around his body. **It is the same in this case. It is called an adornment of fragrant light.**"

P4 He recollects how he benefited himself and benefited others.

Sutra:

"On the causal ground I used mindfulness of the Buddha to enter into patience with the non-production of dharmas. Now in this world I gather in all those who are mindful of the Buddha and bring them back to the Pure Land.

Commentary:

"**On the causal ground I used mindfulness of the Buddha to enter into patience with the non-production of dharmas.** Great Strength Bodhisattva says that on the causal ground, that is, when he had first brought forth the resolve to cultivate the Way as a bhikshu, he obtained the patience with the non-production of dharmas by reciting the Buddha's name. "**Now in this world**-the Saha World, **I gather in all those who are mindful of the Buddha**" Just as a magnet collects iron filings, Great Strength Bodhisattva receives and gathers in all beings who practice mindfulness of the Buddha **and** brings **them back to the Pure Land**. He takes them to the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

P5 He concludes his answer by telling how he was certified to perfect penetration.

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I would select none other than gathering in the six organs through continuous pure mindfulness to obtain samadhi. This is the foremost method."

Commentary:

"Now **the Buddha asks about** the Dharma door of **perfect penetration. I would select none other than gathering in the six**

organs through continuous pure mindfulness. I have no other choice; I have only the Dharma-door of mindfulness of the Buddha. I used this Dharma-door to gather in the six sense-organs and the false thinking that arises from them. I controlled the six sense-organs so they did not create false thinking. I recited so the pure mindfulness of the Buddha continued uninterrupted, until I obtained that kind of samadhi. **This is the foremost method.** This is the best Dharma-door."

The Ear Organ

(Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva)

L2 Gwan Yin speaks in detail.
M1 He explains how he received a prediction from a former Buddha.

Sutra:

Then Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet and said to the Buddha:

Commentary:

Above, Great Strength Bodhisattva told how he cultivated the Dharma-door of mindfulness of the Buddha, which is a very appropriate method for people in this day and age. It's quite effective. Why? The Sutras tell us that in the Dharma-Ending Age, not even one in a million people who cultivate will attain the Way. That many people cultivate and not even one person among them attains to the Way.' Then what shall we do? Don't worry. It goes on to say, "Only by mindfulness of the Buddha are they taken across." The Dharma-door of reciting the Buddha's name is very easy. With the Dharmadoor of mindfulness of the Buddha,

One transcends the Three Realms
through the side door (horizontally),

And carries one's karma
into that rebirth.

What does it mean to transcend the Three Realms through the side door? It's like an insect in a piece of bamboo. If the insect were to gnaw its way out through the length of the bamboo, it would have to go through all the sections; it would take a long time. If the insect were to gnaw a hole in the side of the bamboo instead, it would get out very easily. People who are mindful of the Buddha are like the insect who goes out the side of the bamboo; they escape the Three Realms on a horizontal plane – right at the level they are. "One carries one's karma into that rebirth." The karma one carries is former karma, not current karma – it is old karma, not new karma. This means that before you understood the method of being mindful of the Buddha, you created offenses. You can take that karma with you when you go to rebirth in the Pure Land. But you shouldn't continue to create bad karma once you know about reciting the Buddha's name, because you can't take that karma along. Once you know about mindfulness of the Buddha, you should change your ways. Don't keep creating bad karma. If you do, you will be piling karma on top of karma, adding offenses to offenses. That's called "knowing clearly and transgressing intentionally," in which case, the offenses are tripled. You can take your old karma with you, but now that you understand the Buddhadharma, you can't say, "Oh, I can recite the Buddha's name on the one hand and create bad karma on the other hand, because in the future I can take my karma with me to the Land of Ultimate Bliss." That's a mistake. Not only will you be unable to take that karma with you, you won't be able to be reborn there at all, because you will be hindered by your karma. We people who believe in the Buddha should take care not to create any further offenses once we know about mindfulness of the Buddha. This section of text concerning Great Strength Bodhisattva's perfect penetration through mindfulness of the Buddha is extremely important. Everyone should know what the Dharma-door of mindfulness of the Buddha is all about.

Why should we be mindful of the Buddha? Because we have great causes and conditions with Amitabha Buddha. Amitabha Buddha became a Buddha ten kalpas ago. Before that, he was called Bhikshu Dharma Treasury. At that time he made forty-eight great vows. In making his thirteenth and fourteenth vows he said, "If the living beings throughout the ten directions say my name and do not become Buddhas, I will not attain the right enlightenment." In other words, if people who recite his name do not become Buddhas, he will not become a Buddha. And because of the power of Amitabha Buddha's vows, everyone who recites his name can get reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

The Pure Land Dharma-door comprises one of the Five Schools of Chinese Buddhism.

1. The Ch'an (Dhyana) School,
2. The Teaching School,
3. The Vinaya School,
4. The Secret School,
5. The Pure Land School.

The Pure Land Sect will be the last of the five to endure. In this world, during the Dharma-ending Age, the *Shurangama Sutra* will be the first Sutra to disappear. After that, the other Sutras will disappear also, until only the *Amitabha Sutra* is left. While the *Amitabha Sutra* remains in the world, it will take many people across. After another hundred years, it will also be gone. "Dharma ending" simply means that the Dharma will entirely disappear. Once the *Amitabha Sutra* has vanished, all that will be left will be the phrase, "Namo Amitabha Buddha." This tremendous phrase will also take many people across; then, after another hundred years, it, too, will disappear. All that will be left then will be the name "Amitabha Buddha," which will remain in the world yet another hundred years and then vanish as well. At that point there will be no Buddhadharma remaining in the world. While we are still at the advent of the Dharma-ending Age, we should practice and uphold the events of the Proper Dharma Age. That's called

"Requesting that the Buddhas dwell in the world to turn the Dharma Wheel." In the Dharma-ending Age, we should not fear any suffering or difficulty. I don't fear the trouble of lecturing the Sutra for you, and you should not fear the trouble of coming to listen. Strike up your spirits! Don't say you're tired and have to go rest. Forget yourself for the sake of the Dharma.

Take a look at how Shakyamuni Buddha dwelt in the Snowy Mountains for six years for the sake of seeking the Dharma. We haven't gone to the mountains for six years, but the least we can do is investigate Buddhism. Take the Buddhadharma as you would food to eat. "If I don't get to hear this Sutra lecture, it'll be like not getting to eat for several days" – that should be your attitude. "I must hear the Dharma. I will certainly work to understand it truly." Where do you go to gain genuine understanding of the Buddhadharma? You listen to a lot of Sutras. Without hearing the Sutras, you will be unable to open your wisdom. This is especially true of the *Shurangama Sutra*, for it is the Sutra that opens one's wisdom.

Just take as an example this section of the method for obtaining perfect penetration, which the twenty-five sages are explaining. Some accomplished their cultivation by means of the Fire-Light Samadhi. Some reached success by cultivating the Water-Contemplation Samadhi. Some reached perfection by means of the wind, some from emptiness. Some cultivated their eyes and won success, and some used their ears. Each of the six sense-organs was cultivated by one or another of them. Every one of the eighteen realms was cultivated by someone. Hearing these principles, you should apply them to yourself.

Through which sense organ should I cultivate? You ask. Don't be nervous. It is the very organ of the ear which Gwan Yin Bodhisattva used that is best for you. Gwan Yin Bodhisattva perfected his cultivation through the organ of the ear, and Ananda will follow him in cultivating the same method. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of former times have left us such a wonderful Dharma-door that we should also follow the method of cultivating

the organ of the ear to perfect penetration. This is the easiest method.

Then Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet and said to the Buddha. "Gwan" means to contemplate.

> *Using the wisdom capable of contemplation,*
> *One contemplates the objective realm.*

With the capability of wisdom, one regards the state that is being contemplated. The wisdom capable of contemplation is inherent in the self-nature of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva. The objective realm which is contemplated is that of the sounds made by all living beings. You should look into the sounds of suffering, the sounds of happiness, the sounds of what is neither suffering nor happiness, the sounds of goodness, the sounds of evil, the sounds of truth, the sounds of falseness – contemplate all kinds of sounds.

"Shr" is the world, in the sense of time – the past, present, and future. Contemplate living beings' past causes and effects. Contemplate the karma that living beings are now creating. Contemplate the rewards and retributions that living beings will have to undergo in the future. "Why is that person suffering so much?" you reflect, and then you realize: "Oh, in his last life he was not filial to his parents and he wasn't kind to people in general. That's why this time his retribution is unfortunate." Contemplate all kinds of sounds – "Yin."

"Bodhisattva" means "one who enlightens living creatures." It also means "a living being with a great mind for the Way." A Bodhisattva is also known as "an enlightened living being": that refers to his self-enlightenment. When we say he is "one who enlightens living beings," we are referring to his enlightenment of others. Together these mean he is an enlightened living being who wants to cause all living beings to become enlightened. What Bodhisattvas do is enlighten themselves and enlighten others, benefit themselves and benefit others. You who study the Buddhad-

harma should remember the definition of Bodhisattva. Don't let it be like the people who held a meeting of the "United Sangha," but when someone asked them what "Sangha" meant they were left speechless. Inconceivable!

Sutra:

"World Honored One, I remember when, as many kalpas ago as there are sands in the Ganges, there was a Buddha in the world named Contemplating the World's Sounds. It was under that Buddha that I brought forth the Bodhi-resolve. That Buddha taught me to enter samadhi through a process of hearing and reflecting.

Commentary:

Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva said to Shakyamuni Buddha, "**World Honored One, I remember when, as many kalpas ago as there are sands in the Ganges,** passing back through an incredibly long time – unreckonable aeons as numerous as the Ganges' sands, **there was a Buddha in the world named Contemplating the World's Sounds.**" "Contemplating the World's Sounds" is the English translation of the name Gwan Shr Yin. This is the Gwan Yin of old. That Thus Come One, Gwan Shr Yin, also cultivated perfect penetration by means of the organ of the ear. "**It was under that Buddha that I brought forth the Bodhi-resolve.** I resolved to attain the Way of enlightenment. **That Buddha taught me to enter samadhi through a process of hearing and reflecting.**" The Gwan Yin Buddha of old taught him the process of hearing and reflecting. It is from the wisdom of hearing, the wisdom of reflecting, and the wisdom of cultivating that he entered samadhi. Here "reflection" does not refer to the thinking of the sixth mind-consciousness. Rather, it has the meaning of quiet consideration – the skill of Ch'an.

M2 He gradually unties the knot, cultivates, and is certified.

Sutra:

“Initially, I entered the flow through hearing and forgot objective states. Since the sense-objects and sense-organs were quiet, the two characteristics of movement and stillness crystallized and did not arise. After that, gradually advancing, the hearing and what was heard both disappeared. Once the hearing was ended, there was nothing to rely on, and awareness and the objects of awareness became empty. When the emptiness of awareness reached an ultimate perfection, emptiness and what was being emptied then also ceased to be. Since production and extinction were gone, still extinction was revealed.

Commentary:

“Initially, I entered the flow through hearing and forgot objective states.” With the wisdom of hearing, one listens inside, not outside. Not chasing after the objects of sound means not following them out. Earlier, the text spoke of not following the six sense-organs and not being turned by them. This is known as,

Returning the hearing to hear the self-nature.

Returning the hearing means not listening to external sounds but turning back instead to hear your own self-nature. It means,

Gathering in your body and mind.

It means not seeking outside.

Turn the light around and shine it within.

Here the text says that Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva “entered the flow,” which means he returned and listened to the self-nature.

Enter the flow of the Dharma-nature of a sage.

He “forgot the objective states.” All the “dust” – the defiling objects of the six-sense objects as perceived by the six sense-organs – was forgotten.

“Since the sense-objects and sense-organs were quiet, the two characteristics of movement and stillness crystallized and did not arise.” The source of the six sense-organs and six sense-objects ceased to be. It was severed. Here he entered the flow of his own self-nature. When that happens, your self-nature is still and quiet. When this quietude reaches an ultimate point, the appearance of movement and stillness ceases as well. Basically, movement appears as movement and stillness as stillness, but now, although these two characteristics are as clear as crystal, they do not arise.

“After that, gradually advancing, the hearing and what was heard both disappeared.” As this pure and clear state of quiet increased, as day by day it became more full and complete, the hearing that was capable of hearing the self-nature eventually disappeared. It, too, was gone. The ability to hear and the objects of hearing both vanished. The organ of the ear was capable of hearing, and the self-nature was what was being heard, but now they, too, were gone. **“Once the hearing was ended, there was nothing to rely on.”** Since the hearing-nature was gone, there was no attachment. At that time it was “producing the mind that does not dwell anywhere.”

“Awareness and the objects of awareness became empty.” Even the perception of awareness vanished – was emptied out. **“When the emptiness of awareness reached an ultimate perfection, emptiness and what was being emptied then also ceased to be.”** The emptiness of the nature of awareness reached an ultimate state of perfection. Then the mind capable of creating vanished, as did the states that were made empty, so that then there wasn’t even any emptiness! As long as emptiness remains, you’re still attached to emptiness. But now, for Gwan Yin Bodhisattva there wasn’t even any emptiness.

"Since production and extinction were gone, still extinction was revealed." Since the mind subject to production and extinction vanished, the genuine bliss of still extinction manifested. That state is inexpressibly blissful.

M3 He explains how in accord with the substance he gives rise to the function.
N1 He lists the two sources.

Sutra:

"Suddenly I transcended the mundane and transcendental worlds, and throughout the ten directions a perfect brightness prevailed. I obtained two supreme states.

Commentary:

When still extinction manifested, **"Suddenly I transcended the mundane and transcendental worlds."** This refers to the world of sentience and the world of material objects. **"And throughout the ten directions a perfect brightness prevailed."** He was united as one with the worlds of the ten directions without any difficulty. **"I obtained two supreme states."**

Sutra:

"First, I was united above with the fundamental, wonderfully enlightened mind of all the Buddhas of the ten directions, and I gained a strength of compassion equal to that of all the Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones.

Commentary:

His compassionate mind was exactly like the compassionate mind of all Buddhas.

Sutra:

"Second, I was united below with all living beings in the six paths, and I gained a kind regard for all living beings equally.

Commentary:

"Second, I was united below with all living beings in the six paths." What are the living beings in the six paths? Looked at in terms of a single person, the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and

mind are living beings in the six paths. They are the cycle of the six paths, as are forms, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas; these are also the revolutions of the six paths. They are the six paths of living beings in our own self-natures. There is a connection between these six paths within and the six paths outside. The external six paths are the path of heavenly beings, asuras, people, animals, hungry ghosts, and dwellers in the hells. The category of asuras includes all beings who like to fight. Asuras who use their pugnacious natures beneficially join the armed services and protect the country. Asuras who use their propensity to fight in a bad way end up as thieves, robbers, and gunmen. Asuras may live in the heavens, among people, in the animal realm, or as ghosts. Sometimes asuras are counted as part of the "Three Good Paths," that is, the gods, asuras, and humans. Sometimes they are placed with the "Four Evil Destinies," that is, the hells, hungry ghosts, animals, and asuras. When you put them together – gods, humans, asuras, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell-dwellers – you have the Cycle of the Six Paths.

The Buddhas are above Gwan Yin Bodhisattva, so the Bodhisattva says, "I was united above with the compassion of all Buddhas." Beings in the six paths are at a lesser level than Gwan Yin Bodhisattva, so the Bodhisattva says, "I was united below with beings in the six paths." "Living beings" (眾生 *jung seng*) are defined as those born (生 *seng*) from a multitude (眾 *jung*) of conditions. There are many factors involved in the birth of beings. The Bodhisattva goes on, "I was united with living beings, **and I gained a kind regard for all living beings equally.**" Beings contemplate and seek the kindness of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

N2 He explains in three parts.
O1 Thirty-two response bodies.
P1 He relies on the compassionate power.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, because I served and made offerings to the Thus Come One, Gwan Yin, I received from that Thus Come One a transmission of the Vajra Samadhi of all being like an illusion, as one becomes permeated with hearing and cultivates hearing. Because I gained a power of compassion identical with that of all Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones, I became accomplished in thirty-two response-bodies and entered all lands.

Commentary:

"World Honored One, because I served and made offerings to the Thus Come One, Gwan Yin, I received from that Thus Come One a transmission of the Vajra Samadhi of all being like an illusion, as one becomes permeated with hearing and cultivates hearing." It is said to be like an illusion because one cultivates without cultivating; without cultivating, one cultivates. It means that one is always aware of what is going on at any given moment and never forgets about it. And yet, though one does not forget, one does not really think about it, either. Without thinking about it, one has nonetheless not forgotten it.

"Permeated with hearing" means that every day he cultivated the method of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature, until he was infused with skill. This is the method of the Vajra Samadhi. When one succeeds in this concentration, one has attained the Vajra Samadhi.

"**Because I gained a power of compassion identical with that of all Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones, I became accomplished in thirty-two response-bodies and entered all lands.** I gained a compassionate power identical to the Buddhas, and it enabled me to make thirty-two transformation-bodies out of my own body. Then I went to all countries to teach and transform living beings."

P2 He explains the wonderful responses one by one.

Q1 He responds to the seeking of the sages.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, if there are Bodhisattvas who enter samadhi and vigorously cultivate the extinction of outflows, who have superior understanding and manifest perfected penetration, I will appear in the body of a Buddha and speak dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.

Commentary:

"World Honored One, if there are Bodhisattvas who enter samadhi and vigorously cultivate the extinction of outflows" – they have attained samadhi and wish to progress in their cultivation and attain a genuine state of no outflows – Nirvana without residue. They are those **"who have superior understanding and manifest perfected penetration."** Their wisdom is extremely wonderful, and they display the state of perfect penetration of the six organs. "**I will appear in the body of a Buddha and speak dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.** When I encounter living beings like this, I'll manifest the physical form of a Buddha. Although I have not become a Buddha myself, the power of my compassion is identical with that of all Buddhas. Based on this power of compassion, I will manifest as a Buddha and speak Dharma for these Bodhisattvas, so that they may succeed in becoming liberated."

Sutra:

"If there are those who are studying, who are tranquil and have wonderful clarity, who are superior and miraculous and manifest perfection, I will appear before them in the body of a Solitarily Enlightened One and speak Dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.

Commentary:

"If there are those who are studying, who are tranquil and have wonderful clarity…" "Those who are studying" refers to

those prior to the Fourth Stage of Arhatship. Those **“who are superior and miraculous and manifest perfection”** are those who have attained the bliss of tranquility and wisdom which is wonderfully clear. Their wisdom is supreme, and they display perfect penetration. “**I will appear before them in the body of a Solitarily Enlightened One**. For that kind of living being I will manifest as one who is solitarily enlightened,” that is, a person of the Two Vehicles who awakens to the Way when there is no Buddha in the world. They cultivate the Twelve Causal Conditions and become enlightened.

In the spring they contemplate
the blossoming of the white flowers;
In the fall they observe
the falling of the yellow leaves.

They awaken to the principle of the natural process of birth and extinction of the myriad things and events in the world. That’s how they become enlightened. The Bodhisattva will appear as a Solitarily Enlightened One **“and speak Dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.”**

Sutra:

“If there are those who are studying, who have severed the twelve causal conditions, and, having severed the conditions, reveal a supreme nature, and who are superior and wonderful and manifest perfection, I will appear before them in the body of one enlightened to conditions and speak dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.

Commentary:

“If there are those who are studying, who have severed the twelve causal conditions, and, having severed the conditions, reveal a supreme nature…” Again, “those who are studying” refers to the first three stages of Arhatship. The Twelve Causal Conditions have been explained before. They are extremely important:

1. Ignorance conditions activity;
3. activity conditions consciousness;
4. consciousness conditions name and form;
5. name and form condition the six sense-organs;
6. the six sense-organs condition contact;
7. contact conditions feeling;
8. feeling conditions craving;
9. craving conditions grasping;
10. grasping conditions becoming;
11. becoming conditions birth;
12. birth conditions old age and death.

This is the door of mutual arising.

When ignorance is extinguished,
activity is extinguished;
when activity is extinguished,
consciousness is extinguished;
when consciousness is extinguished,
name and form are extinguished;
when name and form are extinguished,
the six sense-organs are extinguished;
when the six sense-organs are extinguished,
contact is extinguished;
when contact is extinguished,
feeling is extinguished;
when feeling is extinguished,
craving is extinguished;
when craving is extinguished,
grasping is extinguished;
when grasping is extinguished,
becoming is extinguished;
when becoming is extinguished,
birth is extinguished;

when birth is extinguished,
old age and death are extinguished.

This is the door of returning to extinction. People who cultivate toward Arhatship become very clear about ignorance and the connections that bring about birth. From birth comes death, and one is born and dies again, cyclically. They put an end to the cycle by first extinguishing ignorance. Once ignorance is extinguished, the other links are extinguished in turn. Once they sever these conditions, they discover a supreme nature. They become those **"who are superior and wonderful and manifest perfection, I will appear,"** says Gwan Yin Bodhisattva, **"before them in the body of one enlightened to conditions and speak dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation."**

Sutra:

"If there are those who are studying, who have attained the emptiness of the Four Truths, and cultivating the Way, have entered extinction, and have a superior nature and manifest perfection, I will appear before them in the body of a Sound-Hearer and speak Dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.

Commentary:

"**If there are those who are studying, who have attained the emptiness of the Four Truths, and cultivating the Way, have entered extinction…** Perhaps there are Sound-Hearers, Arhats, who understand the principle of emptiness with regard to the Four Truths, who have cultivated the Way and have attained the bliss of Nirvana. They **have a superior nature and manifest perfection.** They display a state of perfect penetration and fusion. **I will appear before them in the body of a Sound-Hearer and speak Dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.**" Why does the Bodhisattva manifest the body of a Sound-Hearer? It's because in doing so he becomes like them, and it is easier to communicate. He becomes a good friend and there is mutual trust established. If one

has no affinities with people, then no matter how well one may speak, one won t be believed. He appears like them in order to teach and transform them. Sound-Hearers awaken to the Way upon hearing the Buddha’s sound. They are people of the Two Vehicles.

Q2 He responds to the seeking of the gods.
R1 Heavenly kings.

Sutra:

“If there are living beings who wish to have their minds be clear and awakened, who do not engage in mundane desires and wish to purify their bodies, I will appear before them in the body of a Brahma King and speak Dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.

Commentary:

“If there are living beings” – these beings are not Sound-Hearers, nor those Enlightened to Conditions, nor Bodhisattvas; they are ordinary beings in the six paths. They are those **“who wish to have their minds be clear and awakened”** They want to attain enlightenment – genuine understanding. They are those **“who do not engage in mundane desires.”** They abstain from greed and desire (sexual desire) in the wearisome mundane world, because they “**wish to purify their bodies, I will appear before them in the body of a Brahma King and speak Dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.** I will appear as the Great Brahma Heaven Lord and explain the Dharma for them so that they can become free.”

Sutra:

“If there are living beings who wish to be the Heavenly Lord, leader of heavenly beings, I will appear before them in the body of Shakra and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are living beings who wish to be the Heavenly Lord”: this refers to the Christian God. They want to be the

"leader of heavenly beings." They want to rule the heavens. "**I will appear before them in the body of Shakra and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.** I will manifest as Shakra for that kind of living being." Shakra is the Heavenly Lord – God.

Did you know that the Holy Mother of Catholicism is Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva? Catholics believe in the Holy Mother, because they want to be born in the heavens. So Gwan Yin Bodhisattva manifests as a goddess to teach and transform them, enabling them to be born in the heavens. Of course, they will have to come back again from the heavens, but gradually they will make progress. Why does Gwan Yin manifest and speak a dharma to help people get born in the heavens? His ultimate aim is to get them to believe in the Buddha. But since at present their wish is to be born in the heavens, he teaches them how to get reborn there. When they return from there, they will eventually come to believe in the Buddha. Ordinary people feel that the time involved in this process is quite long, but actually in the Buddhas' eyes, it is a mere moment, a blink of an eye.

This method can be likened to that of parents who want their child to master an excellent profession, but whose child does not wish to study that profession. The parents comply and allow the child to study what he wishes, but after several false starts, he eventually winds up studying that excellent profession his parents suggested. Gwan Yin Bodhisattva's method for teaching and transforming living beings is to fulfill whatever wishes they might have. But the ultimate aim is always to bring living beings to the accomplishment of Buddhahood.

Sutra:

"If living beings wish to attain physical self-mastery and to roam throughout the ten directions, I will appear before them in the body of a god from the heaven of self-mastery and speak dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

"**If living beings wish to attain physical self-mastery…** They want to be free and at ease so that they can do whatever they want. **"I will appear before them in the body of a god from the heaven of self-mastery and speak dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish."** The gods from the Heaven of Self-Mastery can roam at will, going wherever they want.

Sutra:

"If there are living beings who wish to attain physical self-mastery and fly through space, I will appear before them in the body of a god from the heaven of great self-mastery and speak dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

"**If there are living beings who wish to attain physical self-mastery…** They want to be free and at ease, to have their bodies change forms at will . They want to be able to **fly through space**. Since they have this wish, I will ground myself in the spirit of the Buddha's compassionate strength from above and **I will appear before them in the body of a god from the heaven of great self-mastery and speak dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.**" The Lord of the Heaven of Great Self-Mastery is extremely independent and blissful. Gwan Yin Bodhisattva manifests as this god in order to cause living beings to succeed in their wish.

R2 Heavenly ministers.

Sutra:

"If there are living beings who are fond of ruling over ghosts and spirits in order to rescue and protect their country, I will appear before them in the body of a great heavenly general and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are living beings who are fond of ruling over ghosts and spirits in order to rescue and protect their country…” Some beings like to command ghosts and spirits. They do this out of a sense of patriotic spirit for their country – in order to save it and guard it. **“I will appear before them in the body of a great heavenly general and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”**

Sutra:

“If there are living beings who like to govern the world in order to protect living beings, I will appear before them in the body of one of the Four Heavenly Kings and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are living beings who like to govern the world in order to protect living beings…” They want to rule the world. They want to be leaders in the world in order to protect the living beings in it. **“I will appear before them in the body of one of the Four Heavenly Kings and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”** The Four Heavenly Kings are: Maintaining-the-Country (*Dhirtarashtra*) who oversees the Eastern continent Purvavideha; Increasing (*Virudhaka*) who oversees the Southern continent Jambudvipa; Vast Eyes (*Virupaksha*) who oversees the Western continent Aparagodaniya; and Learned (*Vaishravana*) who oversees the Northern continent Uttarakuru.

For people who want to rule the country and protect the people, Gwan Yin Bodhisattva manifests in response as one of the Four Heavenly Kings.

Sutra:

“If there are living beings who enjoy being born in the heavenly palaces and to command ghosts and spirits, I will appear before them in the body of a prince from the kingdoms

of the Four Heavenly Kings and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“**If there are living beings who enjoy being born in the heavenly palaces** to delight in heavenly blessings... While they are in the heavens, they can **command ghosts and spirits**. They order the ghosts to do things for them. They summon the spirits and put them to work. Actually the ability to command ghosts and spirits is rather ordinary. People may find it strange, but actually it isn’t. For those who like to order the ghosts and spirits around, **“I will appear before them in the body of a prince from the kingdoms of the Four Heavenly Kings and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”**

Q3 He responds to the seeking of the human destiny.
R1 Kings, ministers, citizens.

Sutra:

“If there are living beings who would like to be kings of people, I will appear before them in the body of a human king and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If someone wants to rule over people, I will appear as a ruler of people and speak the Dharma for them.”

Sutra:

“If there are living beings who enjoy being heads of households, whom those of the world venerate and yield to, I will appear before them in the body of an elder and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“**If there are living beings who enjoy being heads of households…** They like being wealthy and ruling over a large clan. They want to be people **whom those of the world venerate and**

yield to. People venerate them and bend to their wishes. People are extremely respectful of such a one and trust him. **I will appear before them in the body of an elder and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.** I will appear as a mighty and wealthy elder to speak the Dharma for them.” A person must have ten kinds of virtuous conduct in order to earn the title of elder. They are:

1. His name is honored.
2. His position is lofty.
3. His wealth is great.
4. His deportment is awesome.
5. His wisdom is profound.
6. His life is long.
7. His conduct is pure.
B. His propriety is perfect.
9. He is praised by those above him.
10. He is a refuge for those below him.

Sutra:

“If there are living beings who delight in discussing the classics and who keep themselves lofty and pure, I will appear before them in the body of an upasaka and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are living beings who delight in discussing the classics…” Perhaps they like poetry, or they are interested in the writings of famous authors. They can recite much of this material from memory. **“**They **keep themselves lofty and pure.”** If asked to do something they consider beneath them, they won’t have anything to do with it. “**I will appear before them in the body of an upasaka and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.** I will appear as a layman and speak Dharma for them.

Sutra:

"If there are living beings who enjoy governing the country and who can handle matters of state decisively, I will appear before them in the body of an official and speak Dharma for them, enabling then to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

"**If there are living beings who enjoy governing the country and who can handle matters of state decisively…** They legislate the great matters of the country. **I will appear before them in the body of an official and speak Dharma for them, enabling then to accomplish their wish.**" I will appear as a minister or official and speak the Dharma for them.

Sutra:

"If there are living beings who like reckoning and incantation and who wish to guard and protect themselves, I will appear before them in the body of a Brahman and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

"If there are living beings who like reckoning and incantation…" "Reckoning" refers to mathematics and divination. "Incantation" refers to the black arts – various dharma-devices. It also refers to the spells and mantras of externalist ways. The former Brahma Heaven mantra of the Kapila religion that Matangi's mother used as an example of this. These beings **wish to guard and protect themselves.**" They figure that if they learn a mantra or dharma, it can protect them. **"I will appear before them in the body of a Brahman and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish."** Brahmanism is a religion in India. The name means "descended from the pure" and represents their cultivation of pure practices. These people have a lot of dharmic devices. They can recite mantras and have many devious magic tricks. And because Gwan Yin Bodhisattva constantly accords with

living beings, he also appears as a Brahman to speak the Dharma, so that these kinds of people can have what they wish for.

R2 Sangha members.

Sutra:

"If there are men who want to leave the home-life and uphold the precepts and rules, I will appear before them in the body of a Bhikshu and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

"If there are men who want to leave the home-life and uphold the precepts and rules…" These men study the Sutras and decide they want to leave the home-life. What home do they leave? They leave three types of homes:

1. They leave the ordinary worldly home.
2. They leave the home of afflictions.
3. They leave the home of the Triple Realm.

The ordinary worldly home refers to one's family. The home of affliction means dwelling in ignorance. One should get out of ignorance. The Triple Realm, also known as the three realms of existence, refers to existence in the desire realm, existence in the form realm, and existence in the formless realm. It is not until you have left the Triple Realm that you can be certified to the fruition of Arhatship.

When these men leave home, they will uphold the precepts and rules. Precepts and rules are extremely important. One who holds the precepts cannot lie or exaggerate. At the very least, one should maintain the five precepts, which prohibit killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicants or drugs. Here, "precepts and rules" does not just refer to the first five, however. These men uphold the five precepts, the eight precepts, the ten major and forty-eight minor Bodhisattva precepts, and the two hundred and fifty bhikshu precepts. They guard and protect the precepts and do not

violate them. **"I will appear before them in the body of a Bhikshu and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish."** "Bhikshu" has three meanings:

1. mendicant;
2. frightener of Mara;
3. destroyer of evil.

Every day bhikshus would take their bowls and go out to beg for food. They did not prepare their own food. So they are called mendicants. There are three precept platforms for receiving the complete precepts. When one ascends to the bhikshu platform, the Karmadana asks, "Are you a great hero?"

The answer is, "I am a great hero."

The Karmadana asks, "Have you already brought forth the resolve for Bodhi?"

The answer is, "I have already brought forth the resolve for Bodhi."

Then one is given the bhikshu precepts, and an earth-traveling yaksha informs a space-traveling yaksha about it, and the word is passed among the flying yakshas until it reaches the heavenly demons in the Sixth Desire Heaven. They report: "Someone in the world has just left the home-life and become a bhikshu." This terrifies the demon king, who says, "My retinue is less by one and the Buddha's retinue has increased by one."

What evil do bhikshus destroy? The evil of affliction. Without really knowing why, people from time to time give rise to affliction. When they become afflicted, they lose all their talent except for the capacity to turn to evil. For instance, a vegetarian may get upset, and the first thing he decides to do is stop his practice of pure eating. "I'm going to eat meat," he decides. As soon as people's afflictions arise, they forget everything except how to do bad things. Or, suppose there's someone who stopped smoking for a long time. When he gets upset, however, the first thing he does is reach for a cigarette. And pretty soon he's back on heroin, opium,

and cigarettes all in the same inhale! He's puffing and smoking up a storm. He's inhaling and exhaling so fast that it's as if he'd become an immortal who can breathe clouds and spit fog. A person who likes to drink vows that he'll never touch another drop. But then he gets angry about something and he goes out and buys a bottle to get drunk and drown his sorrows. Who would have guessed that the more he drinks, the more depressed he be-comes, but he doesn't realize it, because he's drunk. When he wakes up from the spree, every bone in his body aches. Ask anyone who drinks and they'll tell you that the morning after is terrible. If he's broke by then, there's nothing he can do but endure it. But if he's got any money left, the chances are that he'll go buy another bottle and start in again. Getting drunk is all he knows how to do.

In general, when your afflictions rise up, you do things that you ordinarily wouldn't do. It even happens that someone swears he would never kill anyone, but when he gets afflicted, he totally disregards everything and decides to kill everyone in the world. And he takes a knife and starts doing just that.' So, affliction is something to avoid. Don't give rise to affliction. You want to leave the home of afflictions.

One also wants to get out of the home of the triple world, and so "leaving home" has these three meanings.

Sutra:

"If there are women who would like to leave the home-life and hold the pure precepts, I will appear before them in the body of a Bhikshuni and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

"If there are women who would like to leave the home-life and hold the pure precepts..." They also want to study the Buddhadharma. They also leave the worldly home, the home of afflictions, and the home of the triple realm. Women have more precepts than men. They hold three hundred forty-eight precepts. Women are said to have a body with five outflows. So they have a

lot more precepts. **"I will appear before them in the body of a Bhikshuni and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish."**

Sutra:

"If there are men who want to uphold the five precepts, I will appear before them in the body of an upasaka and speak dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish. If there are women who wish to base themselves in the five precepts, I will appear before them in the body of an upasika and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

"**If there are men who want to uphold the five precepts –** that is, no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no lying, and no intoxicants **– I will appear before them in the body of an upasaka and speak dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.** I will manifest as a layman and speak the Dharma for them. **If there are women who wish to base themselves in the five precepts –** they also want to uphold these precepts. **I will appear before them in the body of an upasika.** I will manifest as a laywoman **and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.**"

R3 Wives of officials.

Sutra:

"If there are women who govern internal affairs of household or country, I will appear before them in the body of a queen, first lady, or noblewoman and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

"If there are women who govern internal affairs of household or country…" Perhaps these women look after matters, or perhaps they work for governmental departments which handle a

country's internal affairs, and they govern matters of state. **"I will appear before them in the body of a queen, first lady, or noblewoman and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish."** Perhaps Gwan Yin Bodhisattva manifests as the female ruler of a country, or as the wife of the ruling man. Perhaps she appears as an influential matron or a woman versed in social graces. In this way she fulfills the wishes of such women.

R4 Virgin youths.

Sutra:

"If there are virgin lads I will appear before them in the body of a pure youth and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

"If there are virgin lads…" For youngsters who have not known women and are still chaste, **"I will appear before them in the body of a pure youth and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish."**

Sutra:

"If there are maidens who want to remain virgins and do not wish to marry, I will appear before them in the body of a gracious lady and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

"If there are maidens," that is, women who have never known men and have never married, **"who want to remain virgins and do not wish to marry…"** They do not wish to get near men, to marry, or to undergo the experience of being taken. **"I will appear before them in the body of a gracious lady and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish."**

Q4 He responds to those who wish to leave the eight divisions.

Sutra:

"If there are heavenly beings who wish to escape their heavenly destiny, I will appear in the body of a god and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

"If there are heavenly beings who wish to escape their heavenly destiny…" These gods or goddesses don't want to stay in the heavens; they would like to transcend the Triple Realm. "**I will appear in the body of a god and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.** Since they want to transcend the heavens, I manifest before them and, using all kinds of Dharmas, enable them to get what they want."

Sutra:

"If there are dragons who want to quit their lot of being dragons, I will appear before them in the body of a dragon and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

"If there are dragons who want to quit their lot of being dragons…" The average opinion in this day and age is that dragons do not exist. Some people will accept myths about ancient dragons, frightening and immense. There's no way to say for sure about those, but dragons do exist. Where do they live? In dragon palaces in the sea. "We've explored the depths; why haven't we ever run across them?" you wonder. If you can detect their whereabouts, they're not true dragons, because dragons are spiritual creatures. They have spiritual powers and can make themselves big or little at will. They can grow as big as empty space itself. They can shrink to the size of a mote of dust if necessary. They can disappear suddenly, and reappear just as unexpectedly. Their spiritual powers give them the ability to transform themselves in endless ways. Why do they have such powers but only the body of an animal? As cultivators in

previous lives, they brought forth the resolve for the Great Vehicle, but they didn't hold the precepts. They were "quick with the vehicle but slow about the precepts." They were very casual. Since they were "quick with the vehicle," they obtained spiritual powers. But since they did not accept the precepts, they fell into the animal realm. If dragons decide they want to transcend the realm of dragons, Gwan Yin Bodhisattva **"will appear before them in the body of a dragon and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish."**

Sutra:

"If there are yakshas who want to get out of their present fate, I will appear before them in the body of a yaksha and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

"If there are yakshas…" "Yakshas" is a Sanskrit word which means "speedy" (捷疾). It also means "courageous and strong" (勇健). Yakshas are a kind of ghost. There are three main types of ghost:

1. Earth-travelling ghosts;
2. Flying ghosts;
3. Space-travelling ghosts.

A line on the Shurangama Mantra reads, "Yau Cha Jye La He." It refers to the yakshas. In the mantra, the names of the kings of various kinds of ghosts are called. Each king of ghosts rules over a lot of lesser ghosts, and when the name of the ruler is called, all the other ghosts must also respectfully obey one's commands. If the yakshas **"want to get out of their present fate" –** if they don't want to be ghosts – **"I will appear before them in the body of a yaksha and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish."** Gwan Yin Bodhisattva will manifest as a yaksha ghost and help them obtain their wish.

Sutra:

"If there are gandharvas who wish to be freed from their destiny, I will appear before them in the body of a gandharva and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

"If there are gandharvas..." "Gandharva" is a Sanskrit word that means "Incense-Skandha" (香陰), because the act of smelling incense forms their consciousness. They are musicians for the Jade Emperor. When the Jade Emperor lights "sinking-in-the-water incense" wood, they smell the fragrance and are attracted. They come and enjoy making music for the Jade Emperor. These gandharvas may **"wish to be freed from their destiny"** as gandharvas. They do not want to be gandharvas any more. **"I will appear before them in the body of a gandharva and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish."**

Sutra:

"If there are asuras who wish to be liberated from their destiny, I will appear before them in the body of an asura and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

"If there are asuras who wish to be liberated from their destiny..." They want to leave the retinue of asuras. **"I will appear before them in the body of an asura and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish."**

This section includes the beings of the eightfold division of ghosts and spirits, but in the *Shurangama Sutra* the garudas are not included. In the "Universal Door Chapter" of the *Lotus Sutra*, it is related that Gwan Yin Bodhisattva appears in the body of a garuda also. "Garuda" is a Sanskrit word; it means "great golden-winged *p'eng* bird (大鵬金翅鳥). Garudas are also part of the eight divisions, and the fact that the Sutra does not include them here is

perhaps the fault of an omission in copying the text, or perhaps they are understood to be included in the general category of “living beings” mentioned below.

Garudas diet exclusively on dragons. Their wing-span is three hundred thirty great yojanas. A small yojana is forty Chinese miles (one Chinese mile is approximately one-third of an English mile). A middle-sized yojana is sixty miles. A great yojana is eighty miles. With one flap of its wings, the golden-winged p’eng bird flaps away all the waters of the seas. Its strength is that great. Once the waters of the seas are gone, the dragons are exposed. In this way, the garuda was just about to finish off the entire population of dragons. So the dragons went to see the Buddha to seek rescue. “The great golden-winged p’eng bird is about to cause the retinue of dragons to become extinct. What can be done?” They sought the Buddha’s compassion in helping them out; they hoped he would forbid the p’eng bird to eat them. The Buddha gave the dragons pieces of his kashaya for them to attach to their horns. After that, the p’eng bird dared not eat them. With nothing to eat, the p’eng bird also went to the Buddha to ask him to save his life.

“No one is eating you,” said the Buddha. “Why have you come and asked to be saved?”

“It’s true that no one is threatening me, but without anything to eat, I will die of starvation,” said the p’eng. “You don’t permit me to eat dragons anymore, and with nothing to eat, I’m about to die of hunger.” So he asked the Buddha to be compassionate and think of a way to help him.

“You don’t have anything to eat? All right, after this, I will feed you. Every time I and all my disciples eat, we will offer something to you to eat. You don’t have to eat dragons any more.” That is why, during the high meal offering at noon, a little of the food is taken outside and offered to the great golden-winged p’eng bird. This Sutra does not mention the garuda, but we should be aware that the eightfold division of ghosts and spirits includes this kind of being.

Sutra:

"If there are kinnaras who wish to transcend their fate, I will appear before them in the body of a kinnara and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

"If there are kinnaras who wish to transcend their fate…" "Kinnara," also a Sanskrit word, means "questionable spirit" (疑神). They are so called because they appear to be human, but on their heads is a horn. They are another type of music spirit that plays music for the Jade Emperor. **"I will appear before them in the body of a kinnara and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish."**

Sutra:

"If there are mahoragas who wish to be freed from their destiny, I will appear before them in the body of a mahoraga and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

"If there are mahoragas…" "Mahoraga" is a Sanskrit word which means "great python spirit" (大蟒神) and also "earth-dragon" (地龍). The dragons mentioned above can roam in space and are called heavenly dragons. This python, also called a dragon, is confined to the earth. It does not have spiritual powers. Mahoragas are also one of the beings of the eightfold division of ghosts and spirits. If mahoragas **"wish to be freed from their destiny, I will appear before them in the body of a mahoraga and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish."**

Q5 He responds to people who seek to be people.

Sutra:

"If there are living beings who like being people and want to continue to be people, I will appear in the body of a person and

speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

"If there are living beings who like being people and want to continue to be people…" They want to be people life after life. They like being a person and always want to be a person. So Gwan Yin Bodhisattva says, **"I will appear in the body of a person and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish."** He will speak Dharma for these kinds of beings and help them to be successful in their wish.

Q6 He responds to those non-humans who wish to leave their non-human state.

Sutra:

"If there are non-humans, whether with form or without form, whether with thought or without thought, who long to be freed from their destiny, I will appear before them in a body like theirs and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

"If there are non-humans…" This refers to animals and creatures other than people who are **"with form or without form…with thought or without thought."** If there are beings like this **"who long to be freed from their destiny, I will appear before them in a body like theirs and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish."** "With form" means that they have a tangible, visible shape. "Without form" means that they have no visible shape. There are many kinds of beings "with thought." Beings "without thought" include earth, wood, metal, and stone.

Beings "without form" originally were sentient beings, but they have dispersed into emptiness and fallen into oblivion. This is usually a temporary state, and at some point they can again go through rebirth and become a person.

P3 Concludes with the name and the reasons.

Sutra:

"This is called the wonderful purity of the thirty-two response-bodies, by which one enters into all lands and accomplishes self-mastery by means of the Samadhi of Becoming Permeated with Hearing and Cultivating Hearing and by means of the miraculous strength of effortlessness.

Commentary:

"This is called the wonderful purity of the thirty-two response-bodies, by which one enters into all lands and accomplishes self-mastery by means of the Samadhi of Becoming Permeated with Hearing and Cultivating Hearing." One develops the skill of turning back the hearing to hear the self-nature by cultivating every day. And one applies the **"miraculous strength of effortlessness."** "Effortlessness" refers to wonderful principle of the unconditioned. With it, there is no need to go through the conception of an idea and the thought-process of working out the idea, as people must when they want to do something. The Bodhisattva does not have to conceive the idea or think it through. Within samadhi he can do all kinds of things. In the samadhi of becoming permeated with hearing and cultivating hearing he can attain the miraculous power of effortlessness. And in this way he accomplishes self-mastery. Very naturally, matters are taken care of.

O2 Fourteen fearlessnesses.
P1 He relies on kindness.

Sutra:

"Also, World Honored One, using this Vajra Samadhi of Becoming Permeated with Hearing and Cultivating Hearing, and using the miraculous strength of effortlessness, because I have a kind regard equally for all living beings in the six paths, I go throughout the ten directions and the three periods of time

and cause all living beings who encounter bodies of mine to receive the meritorious virtue of fourteen kinds of fearlessness.

Commentary:

"**Also, World Honored One, using this Vajra Samadhi of Becoming Permeated with Hearing and Cultivating Hearing, and using the miraculous strength of effortlessness, because I have a kind regard equally for all living beings in the six paths –** I have a regard for the kindness of the Buddhadharma, just as do all beings in the six paths of gods, humans, asuras, animals, hungry ghosts, and beings in the hells. **I go throughout the ten directions and the three periods of time –** past, present, and future. I cultivated the practice of being permeated with hearing until I attained the Vajra Samadhi, and I did not need to conceptualize or think about things in order to be able to do them. I **cause all living beings who encounter bodies of mine to receive the meritorious virtue of fourteen kinds of fearlessness.** I have attained fourteen kinds of virtue in bestowing fearlessness.

P2 He lists the fourteen fearlessnesses.
Q1 Fearlessness in the eight difficulties.

Sutra:

"First: because I do not contemplate sounds for my own sake, but rather listen to the sounds of those whom I contemplate, I can enable living beings throughout the ten directions who are suffering and in distress to attain liberation by contemplating their sounds.

Commentary:

This is the first of the fourteen kinds of fearlessness. **"First: because I do not contemplate sounds for my own sake, but rather listen to the sounds of those whom I contemplate, I can enable living beings throughout the ten directions who are suffering and in distress to attain liberation by contemplating their sounds."** It's not that he just takes note of his own sound; he contemplates the sounds of beings in the world. "Since my skill at

returning the hearing to hear the self-nature is accomplished, there is no need for me to contemplate myself. I can contemplate all the living beings in the world and enable those who are anguished to be freed. I listen, regarding their sounds of suffering, and I enable them to attain liberation.

Sutra:

"Second: since my knowledge and views have turned around and come back, I can make it so that if living beings are caught in a raging fire, the fire will not burn them.

Commentary:

"Second: since my knowledge and views have turned around and come back" – that is, since Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva has the skill of returning the light to illumine within **– "I can make it so that if living beings are caught in a raging fire, the fire will not burn them."** If such a living being can recite the name of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva and can cultivate, then if he enters a great fire, the fire will not be able to burn him.

Sutra:

"Third: since contemplation and listening have turned around and come back, I can make it so that if living beings are floundering in deep water, the water cannot drown them.

Commentary:

Someone says, "I will test Gwan Yin Bodhisattva to see if he'll really respond. I'll sit on a pile of wood and set it afire and see if I burn up." In that case, you'll certainly burn. "But why does the Sutra say that if you enter a great fire it will not burn you?" That's because the "if" means that it happens to you without your intending it.

Someone else says, "Gwan Yin Bodhisattva says that if one is caught in deep water, one will not be drowned, so I'll just jump into the ocean and see if I drown." Again, you're sure to drown. It is when you unexpectedly meet with suffering or difficulty that Gwan Yin Bodhisattva will rescue you. But if your intention is to test him

out, he will pay no attention to you, because basically you don't believe in Gwan Yin Bodhisattva. If you really believed in him, there would be no reason to test him out. The safest thing would be not to test him out.

Sutra:

"Fourth: since false thinking is cut off, and my mind is without thoughts of killing or harming, I can make it so that if living beings enter the territory of ghosts, the ghosts cannot harm them.

Commentary:

If false thinking is cut off, and you don't have any ideas of killing or harming, and if you can recite the name of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva, you can enable beings who enter the region of rakshasa ghosts to not be harmed by the ghosts.

Sutra:

"Fifth: since I am permeated with hearing and have brought hearing to accomplishment, so that the six sense-organs have dissolved and returned to become identical with hearing, I can make it so that if living beings are about to be wounded, the knives will break into pieces. I can cause swords of war to have no more effect than if they were to slice into water, or if one were to blow upon light.

Commentary:

"**Fifth: since I am permeated with hearing and have brought hearing to accomplishment, so that the six sense-organs have dissolved and returned to become identical with hearing –** that is, when the skill of cultivating the return of the hearing to hear the self-nature is accomplished, the six sense-organs function mutually. Then **I can make it so that if living beings are about to be wounded, the knives will break into pieces.** For instance, suppose someone takes up a knife with the intent of cutting off someone's head. Just as the blade is about to fall, the knife of itself breaks into pieces. **I can cause swords of war to have no more effect than if**

they were to slice into water, or if one were to blow upon light. I can cause the sharp weapon which is about to cut into someone's shoulder to have the effect of slicing into water: that is, once it has passed through, it is gone, and no injury is sustained. Or, I can make the cut of the blade have the effect of blowing upon light: that is, no effect, since no matter how much you blow on light, it will not move.

Sutra:

"Sixth: when the hearing permeates and the essence is bright, light pervades the Dharma-realm, so that absolutely no darkness remains. I am then able to make it so that, though yakshas, rakshasas, kumbhandas, pishachas, and putanas may draw near to living beings, the ghosts will not be able to see them.

Commentary:

"**Sixth: when the hearing permeates and the essence is bright –** that is, when the skill of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature is perfected – **light pervades the Dharma-realm, so that absolutely no darkness remains.** The darkness disappears. **I am then able to make it so that, though yakshas, rakshasas, kumbhandas, pishachas, and putanas may draw near to living beings, the ghosts will not be able to see them.**" "Yakshas" are male ghosts, "rakshasas" are female ghosts. Both kinds are extremely fierce. Their diet consists of human corpses. They have certain mantras which are powerful enough to remove the stench of the corpse so they can stand to eat the flesh. "Kumbhanda" is also the name of a king of ghosts. Kumbhanda are shaped like barrels and give people nightmares. For instance, when people are asleep they may see a weird apparition; though in their dream they are mentally alert, they can't move physically. They become paralyzed through the efforts of the nightmare ghosts. Sometimes, if a person's *yang* energies are weak and his *yin* energies prevail, the person can be paralyzed for a long time, and the ghost can

eventually cause the person's death. This kind of ghost abounds in this world.

"Pishachas" are ghosts that eat human essence and energy. and also the essence of grains. "Putanas" are "rulers of fevers." They can cause people to get sick and have a fever. If you cultivate the skill of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature, or if you recite the name of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva, then these ghosts cannot see you, though they may come right up beside you, because you emit light which they fear. Actually, owls and bats can see at any time. Since the ghosts belong to *yin*, they cannot see you if you have *yang* light. They can only find you if you give of *yin* energy.

Sutra:

"Seventh: when the nature of sound completely melts away and contemplation and hearing return and enter, so that I am separate from false and defiling sense-objects, I am able to make it so that if living beings are confined by cangues and fetters, the locks will not hold them.

Commentary:

"Seventh: when the nature of sound completely melts away and contemplation and hearing return and enter, so that I am separate from false and defiling sense-objects…" There is no sound, and even the nature of sound disappears when one returns the act of contemplating and listening back to oneself. One leaves behind the defiling sense objects and all false thinking. Then **I am able to make it so that if living beings are confined by cangues and fetters, the locks will not hold them.**" If you recite the name of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva, the locks fall open by themselves. This happens quite often; a lot of people have had this experience. It's not just a manner of speaking. If people sincerely recite the name of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva, there can be responses like this.

Once there was a person who committed a crime and was put in jail. He and seven or eight other prisoners recited the name of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva. How did he know about doing that? He knew a monk and had asked the monk to save him from his plight. The

monk had said, "If you want me to save you, you must single-mindedly recite the name of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva; then you will be able to get out of this predicament." The prisoner recited Gwan Yin Bodhisattva's name for three days and three nights and then the locks on his cangue and chains spontaneously opened and he was free to go. But he did not go. "What meaning would there be in my going if the others have to stay here?" was his thought. So he taught the others to recite the name of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva. After two more days of recitation, the locks on the other prisoners also fell away. They all returned to their homes. After that, they single-mindedly recited the name of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva; they recited so sincerely that they caused everyone in the village to take up the practice as well.

Sutra:

"Eighth: when sound is gone and the hearing is perfected, an all-pervasive power of compassion arises, and I can make it so that if living beings are travelling a dangerous road, thieves will not rob them.

Commentary:

"**Eighth: when sound is gone and the hearing is perfected, an all-pervasive power of compassion arises.** The sounds of the mundane world cease, and by turning the hearing back to hear the self-nature, one's hearing is perfected, which means that without using the mind to cognize the hearing, one can hear all sounds. **I can make it so that if living beings are travelling a dangerous road, thieves will not rob them.**"

Q2 Fearlessness with the three poisons.

Sutra:

"Ninth: when one is permeated with hearing, one separates from worldly objects, and forms cannot rob one. Then I can make it so that living beings with a great deal of desire can leave greed and desire far behind.

Commentary:

The **Ninth** fearlessness is to be separate from greed and desire. **"When one is permeated with hearing, one separates from worldly objects, and forms cannot rob one."** If one cultivates day after day until the skill of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature is perfected, one can be apart from all superficial states. In particular, one can separate from the realm of the defiling objects of form.

People should not think that beautiful forms are good to get involved with. If you love a beautiful form, it will plunder the treasures of your household. It will take your most ancient and valuable gems and steal them away from you. Rather, it should be that:

Eyes contemplate the shapes of forms,
but inside there is nothing.
Ears hear the worldly sounds,
but the mind does not know.

When you see a beautiful form, your attitude of mind should be that it is as if you had not seen it. If you see a beautiful form and your mind moves, ask yourself why your mind didn't move before you saw it. Don't let forms rob you of the wealth of your household.

Gwan Yin Bodhisattva says, **"I can make it so that living beings with a great deal of desire can leave greed and desire far behind."** A passage in the "Chapter on the Universal Door of Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva" of the *Lotus Sutra* reads: "If people with a great deal of desire can constantly be mindful and respectful of Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva, they can get rid of their desire." That is the meaning of the present lines of text, as well. "A great deal of desire" specifically refers to sexual desire. The biggest problem in human life, the one that is nearly impossible to resolve, is sexual desire. To see through the involvements of men and women and put them down is genuine liberation. If you can't see through them and put them down, you cannot get free, and you cannot become

enlightened. If you are really adept in your skill, then when you eat you won't know you're eating, and when you are dressed you won't know you're wearing clothes. If you can forget about eating and wearing clothes, you will be even more able to renounce external things. If men can forget about their girlfriends and women can forget about their boyfriends – if you can smash through that state – then your skill will have some substance to it. How much the less should you get hung up with your sisters and brothers, your sons and daughters, and the whole lot of relatives. To study the Buddhadharma, you have to put everything down. During the period in which you are studying the Buddhadharma, you should pay no regard to anything else. You should be like a new person just beginning again, and you should forget about all the events of the past. In that way the water of Dharma can moisten your Bodhi heart. If you can t put this down and can't renounce that, then the water of Dharma has no way to nourish your Bodhi heart. If you can constantly recite the name of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva and pay respect to Gwan Yin Bodhisattva, then your thoughts of desire will disappear.

The most important aspect of cultivating the Way is cutting off thoughts of sexual desire. If you cannot do that, you cannot get out of the triple realm. You can't decide that you want to become enlightened and still not be able to part with the experiences of this world. If you can't separate from the affairs of this world, you cannot become a Buddha. You can't have both. Mencius said it well:

You can't have fish and bear-paws at the same time.

Although one may like to eat fish and to eat bear-paws, there is no way one can eat both in the same bite. By the same token, you cannot have worldly pleasures and transcendental bliss at the same time. You want to become a Buddha, but you can't part with mundane wealth, forms, fame, food, and sleep. There's no way you can bring that off.

Sutra:

"Tenth: when sound is so pure that there is no defiling object, the sense-organ and the external state are perfectly fused, without any complement and without anything complemented. Then I can make it so that living beings who are full of rage and hate will leave all hatred.

Commentary:

The Tenth fearlessness: **"When sound is so pure that there is no defiling object, the sense-organ and the external state are perfectly fused."** When one returns the hearing to hear the self-nature, the sound becomes pure, which just means that there isn't any sound. The sound is empty, and the defiling object disappears. Then there is fusion of the six sense-organs and the state of the six sense-objects. In this world, anything evil, no matter what it is, can become good if you know how to deal with it. And good things can turn evil if you cannot deal with them. Earlier in the Sutra the Buddhas of the ten directions told Ananda that the six thieving sense-organs are what causes one to fall, and that the six sense-organs are also what enables one to accomplish Buddhahood. It is the six sense-organs and nothing else. If you use them well, they can help you. If you are unable to use them, they can destroy you. It's just like money: when you have it, if you realize that you should do meritorious things with it and perform all kinds of good deeds to benefit beings, then your money has not be spent badly. But if you use the money to gamble and for opium and various other unwholesome things, then you have used your money to commit offenses. The principle is the same with the six sense-organs.

When the sound is gone and the organs and objects are in perfect accord, there is no **complement** or **anything complemented**. They are non-dual; they have become one. They are united and so there aren't any sense-organs or sense-objects, and yet the sense-organs are just sense-organs, and the sense-objects are just sense-objects. There is no matching of sense-organs with sense-objects when one reaches this state. **Then I can make it so that**

living beings who are full of rage and hate will leave all hatred. I can cause living beings' big tempers and fiery natures and their massive hatred to disappear." "Hatred" refers to getting angry and having afflictions. The *Dharma Flower Sutra* says: "If people who have a lot of anger can constantly be mindful and respectful of Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva, they can get rid of their hatred." The essential point here is being constantly mindful. It's not that you recite today but not tomorrow; recite this morning but not tonight; it's not that you recite this month but not next month. You must recite every day for your practice to be worthy of being called constant mindfulness. And "respectful" does not mean that you recite but never really believe in the Buddha. You harbor a doubt: "Can it really be this way? Is there such a power?" Once you start to question it, you won't be able to be successful. So with faith and constant mindfulness and respect for Gwan Yin Bodhisattva, you won't have a temper any more. You won't be so fiery, and you won't have such huge afflictions. You'll leave them far behind.

Sutra:

"Eleventh: when the dust has gone and has turned to light, the Dharma realm and the body and mind are like crystal, transparent and unobstructed. Then I can make it so that all dark and dull-witted beings whose natures are obstructed – all atyantikas – are forever free from stupidity and darkness.

Commentary:

"Eleventh: when the dust has gone and has turned to light…" When the states of the six sense-organs and six sense-objects melt away, we emit a light. Then, **"the Dharma realm and the body and mind are like crystal."** The body and mind are the Dharma Realm, and the Dharma Realm is the body and mind. They become one. The body and mind pervade the Dharma Realm; isn't that the state of a Buddha? That's also the way Gwan Yin Bodhisattva is. The body and mind become like crystal, **"transparent and unobstructed."** From inside one can see outside, and from outside one can see inside. There is no inside,

outside, big, or little. That's like the monk, Ta Hsiu (大休, "Great Rest"), from Ling Yen Mountain. He deserved his name. He built himself a tomb out of rock just big enough to sit in. Then he made a door for it out of stone and carved a couplet beside it, one line on either side of the door. The couplet went like this:

No big, no little, no inside or out.
I cultivated, I understood, and
I took care of myself.

That is, he did his own cultivation, came to understand by himself, and then made his own funeral arrangements. After he finished the couplet he sat down in the tomb, closed the door, and completed extinction. He entered Nirvana. That is an inconceivable state. So when he took his rest, it was indeed a great one. How vast was his liberation! How free he was! I met this monk at Su Chou at Ling Yen Mountain. He cultivated for himself and took care of everything else as well. He wasn't any trouble for anyone.

"Then I can make it so that all dark and dull-witted beings whose natures are obstructed – all atyantikas – are forever free from stupidity and darkness." They have no wisdom and so they cannot see through and clearly understand anything, just like a dull knife that can't cut clean. They mistake right for wrong and wrong for right. But Gwan Yin Bodhisattva can enable these beings to be separate from obstructions that cover them over. "Atyantikas" is a Sanskrit word that means "unwholesome mind." If you suggest that such a being do something good, he cannot. Rather than give up a penny for some good use, he grips it clutched in his fist with such force that the copper melts. If you tell him to help someone, his reaction is that it's stupid. "My money's for me to spend. Why should I help other people?" However, Gwan Yin Bodhisattva can help such people get out of their stupidity – their dark viewpoint. Someone who doesn't help others doesn't have any light in his own self-nature, and therefore is the stupidest kind of person there is.

The passages just previously discussed greed and hatred. This section concerns stupidity. The *Dharma Flower Sutra* says, “If people with a lot of stupidity can constantly be mindful and respectful of Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva, they can get rid of their stupidity.”

Once there was an extremely wealthy man who really loved money and was loath to give it up. He had three sons. He named the first son “Gold.” “Silver” was the name of the second son. The third son, he was afraid, would do good deeds with his money instead of hoarding it, so he named him “Karmic Obstacle.” When he was about to die he called his first son to his side and said, “I’m about to go. Will you go with me?”

Gold said, “You’re nuts. How could I die with you? You ordinarily love me best. Why is it when it comes time for you to die you want to harm me?” Gold would not go with him.

“Well, I’ll talk it over with the second son, “the father thought, and he called in Silver. “Your older brother won’t accompany me in death. Will you? You’re usually very filial.”

The second son said, “If you’re dying, do it by yourself. Although I’m your son, I can’t follow you into death. You’re getting eccentric. I’m too young to die.” Gold wouldn’t go with him, and neither would Silver.

He called in his third son, Karmic Obstacle. “Usually you’re very disobedient, so I’m not very fond of you. But now I’m about to die, and Gold and Silver won’t go with me. Can you think it over and decide if you can accompany me?”

Karmic Obstacle said, “There’s no need for me to think it over. Of course I’ll go. Now you see that Gold and Silver, whom you’re so fond of, don’t stand up to the test. But I, Karmic Obstacle, will follow you wherever you go. In birth I will accompany you, and in death I will join you. So who’s most filial after all, tell me?”

None of the myriad things can go.
Only karma will follow you.

The old man reflected upon all the gold and silver he had accumulated that would go for the pleasures of his first and second son, while he himself had to die. He experienced deep regret. “If only I had built a temple or a Bodhimanda while there was still time,” he thought. “But now that I’m dying, it’s too late.”

The moral of the story is, don’t be like the old man. If you have the means, do good deeds.

Q3 Fearlessness for those with the two kinds of seeking.

Sutra:

“Twelfth: when matter dissipates and returns to the hearing, then unmoving in the Bodhimanda I can travel through worlds without destroying the appearance of those worlds. I can make offerings to as many Buddhas, Thus Come Ones, as there are fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions. At the side of each Buddha I become a Dharma Prince, and I can make it so that childless living beings throughout the Dharma Realm who wish to have sons, are blessed with meritorious, virtuous, and wise sons.

Commentary:

“Twelfth: when matter dissipates and returns to the hearing – when the physical body is transformed and goes back to the nature of hearing – **then unmoving in the Bodhimanda I can travel through worlds without destroying the appearance of those worlds.”** “The unmoving Bodhimanda” means that he stays in his original Way-place. For instance, Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva is here at the Buddhist Lecture Hall, but although he is here, he can travel throughout the world. He hasn’t moved from here, but his transformation bodies are in all places. And the worlds are not destroyed. With his Dharma body he can **“make offerings to as many Buddhas, Thus Come Ones, as there are fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions.”** He goes throughout the ten directions doing the Buddha’s work. **“At the side of each Buddha I become a Dharma Prince, and I can make it so that childless**

living beings throughout the Dharma Realm who wish to have sons, are blessed with meritorious, virtuous, and wise sons.”

Sutra:

“Thirteenth: with perfect penetration of the six sense-organs, the light and what is illumined are not two. Encompassing the ten directions, a great perfect mirror stands in the Empty Treasury of the Thus Come One. I inherit the secret dharma-doors of as many Thus Come Ones as there are fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions. Receiving them without loss, I am able to make it so that childless living beings throughout the Dharma Realm who seek daughters are blessed with lovely daughters who are upright, virtuous, and compliant and whom everyone cherishes and respects.

Commentary:

“Thirteenth: with perfect penetration of the six sense-organs, the light and what is illumined are not two. Encompassing the ten directions, a great perfect mirror stands in the Empty Treasury of the Thus Come One.” The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind are unobstructed and perfectly inter-penetrated. Everything comes together to one. The six organs function interchangeably. It is as if a huge mirror were set up and the Treasury of the Thus Come One is empty. **“I inherit the secret dharma-doors of as many Thus Come Ones as there are fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions. Receiving them without loss, I am able to make it so that childless living beings throughout the Dharma Realm who seek daughters are blessed with lovely daughters who are upright, virtuous, and compliant and whom everyone cherishes and respects.”** If someone wants a daughter, they will have a daughter who is proper, has virtue, and is easy to get along with. Everyone who sees this girl will be fond of her and respect her. She will be a lovely girl with perfect features.

Q4 Fearlessness in those who hold the name.

Sutra:

"Fourteenth: in this three-thousand-great-thousand world system with its billions of suns and moons, as many Dharma Princes as there are grains of sand in sixty-two Ganges Rivers appear in the world and cultivate the dharma. They act as models in order to teach and transform living beings. They comply with living beings by means of expedients and wisdom, in different ways for each.

Commentary:

The **fourteenth** kind of fearlessness: **"this three-thousand-great-thousand world system with its billions of suns and moons, as many Dharma Princes as there are grains of sand in sixty-two Ganges Rivers appear in the world" –** they are living in the world right now – **"and cultivate the dharma. They act as models in order to teach and transform living beings. They comply with** the wishes of **living beings by means of expedients and wisdom.** They use skill-in-means and provisional wisdom **in different ways for each** kind of living being that is ready to be taught, since each being is different.

Sutra:

"However, because I have obtained the perfect penetration of the sense-organ and have discovered the wonder of the ear-entrance, after which my body and mind subtly and miraculously included all of the Dharma Realm, I am able to make it so that living beings who uphold my name obtain as much merit and virtue as would be obtained by a person who upheld the names of all those Dharma Princes who are as many as the grains of sand in sixty-two Ganges Rivers.

Commentary:

"However, because I have obtained the perfect penetration of the sense-organ and have discovered the wonder of the ear-entrance… I, Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva, obtained perfect

penetration through the organ of the ear and realized the subtleties of the ear, **after which my body and mind subtly and miraculously included all of the Dharma Realm.** This subtle state pervaded everything throughout the Dharma Realm. Therefore, **I am able to make it so that living beings who uphold my name" –** who recite the name of Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva – **"obtain as much merit and virtue as would be obtained by a person who upheld the names of all those Dharma Princes who are as many as the grains of sand in sixty-two Ganges Rivers."** One person recites only the name of Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva, and another person recites the names of as many Bodhisattvas as there are sands in sixty-two Ganges Rivers. The reward of blessings each person obtains will be identical. This shows how magnificent the merit and virtue of Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva are.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, there is no difference between the merit of my one name and the merit of those many other names, because from my cultivation I obtained true and perfect penetration.

Commentary:

"World Honored One, there is no difference between the merit of my one name," the name, Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva, **"and the merit of those many other names,"** that is, the Bodhisattvas who are as many as the grains of sand in sixty-two Ganges Rivers. How can this be? How can the merit of one name be the same as that of so many? It is **"because from my cultivation I obtained true and perfect penetration."**

P3 Concludes with the name and shows the benefits.

Sutra:

"These are called the fourteen powers of bestowing fearlessness; with them I bless living beings.

Commentary:

"I come to their aid. Whenever someone seeks something, I will respond."

O3 Four inconceivables.
P1 He bases himself on the comfort and power of perfect penetration.
P2 The inconceivable identical embodiment of mantras.

Sutra:

"Moreover, World Honored One, because I obtained perfect penetration and cultivated to certification of the unsurpassed path, I also became endowed with four inconceivable and effortless wonderful virtues.

"First: as soon as I obtained the miraculous wonder of hearing the mind, the mind became essential and the hearing was forgotten, therefore, there was no distinction between seeing, hearing, sensation, and knowing. I achieved a single, perfect fusion – pure and precious enlightenment. For this reason, I am able to manifest many wonderful appearances and can proclaim boundless secret spiritual mantras.

Commentary:

"Moreover, World Honored One, because I obtained perfect penetration and cultivated to certification of the unsurpassed path, I also became endowed with four inconceivable and effortless wonderful virtues." What are these four inconceivable virtues? **First: as soon as I obtained the miraculous wonder of hearing the mind, the mind became essential and the hearing was forgotten.** When I first acquired the skill of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature – that wonder of wonders – my mind became essential and the hearing was forgotten." The true mind manifests, and one reaches an essential and wonderful place. "Once the hearing disappeared, **there was no distinction between seeing, hearing, sensation, and knowing.** The other sensations were interfused and could not be divided. **I achieved a single, perfect fusion – pure and precious enlightenment.**" This means he accomplished a oneness without any distinctions between self and

others. **"For this reason, I am able to manifest many wonderful appearances and can proclaim boundless secret spiritual mantras."**

Sutra:

"For example, I may make appear one head, three heads, five heads, seven heads, nine heads, eleven heads, and so forth, until there may be a hundred and eight heads, a thousand heads, ten thousand heads, or eighty-four thousand vajra heads;

Commentary:

Not only does Gwan Yin Bodhisattva have a thousand hands and a thousand eyes, but also myriad heads – as many as eighty-four thousand of them. The appearances which Gwan Yin Bodhisattva makes include, he says, **"one head, three heads" –** the three-faced Gwan Yin **– "five heads" –** the five-faced Gwan Yin – **"seven heads" –** the seven-faced Gwan Yin, or **"nine heads, eleven heads, and so forth, until there may be a hundred and eight heads, a thousand heads, ten thousand heads, or eighty-four thousand vajra heads."** "Vajra" means strong and firm.

Sutra:

"Two arms, four arms, six arms, eight arms, ten arms, twelve arms, fourteen, sixteen, eighteen arms, or twenty arms, twenty-four arms, and so forth until there may be a hundred and eight arms, a thousand arms, ten thousand arms, or eighty-four thousand mudra arms;

Commentary:

Gwan Yin Bodhisattva can also manifest **"Two arms, four arms, six arms, eight arms, ten arms, twelve arms, fourteen, sixteen, eighteen arms, or twenty arms, twenty-four arms…"** Or perhaps he manifests **"…a hundred and eight arms, a thousand arms, ten thousand arms."** "Mudra" is a Sanskrit word that means "seal-hand." On one's hand there is a seal-imprint.

Sutra:

"Two eyes, three eyes, four eyes, nine eyes, and so forth until there may be a hundred and eight eyes, a thousand eyes, ten thousand eyes, or eighty-four thousand pure and precious eyes, sometimes compassionate, sometimes awesome, sometimes in samadhi, sometimes displaying wisdom to rescue and protect living beings so that they may attain great self-mastery.

Commentary:

The Dharma Body of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva can manifest **"two eyes, three eyes, four eyes, nine eyes, and so forth until there may be a hundred and eight eyes, a thousand eyes, ten thousand eyes, or eighty-four thousand pure and precious eyes."** How can Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva manifest so many transformations and appearances? It is because he cultivated the Great Compassion Mantra and the Forty-two Hands and Eyes on the cause-ground, so that, on the ground of fruition, when his cultivation was perfected, he had endless transformations.

"…sometimes compassionate, sometimes awesome, sometimes in samadhi, sometimes displaying wisdom…" His eyes are perhaps compassionate, or maybe their light is awesome. Perhaps his eyes display the light of samadhi or of wisdom. He appears this way in order **"…to rescue and protect living beings so that they may attain great self-mastery."**

P3 The inconceivable embodiment of different mantras.

Sutra:

"Second: because of hearing and consideration, I escaped the six defiling objects, just as a sound leaps over a wall without hindrance. And so I have the wonderful ability to manifest shape after shape and to recite mantra upon mantra. These shapes and these mantras dispel the fears of living beings. Therefore, throughout the ten directions, in as many lands as there are fine motes of dust, I am known as one who bestows fearlessness.

Commentary:

The **second** effortless, wonderful virtue: "**Because of hearing and consideration, I escaped the six defiling objects.** I cultivated the wisdom of hearing and the wisdom of consideration and got out of forms, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas. I was not attached to them. It was **just as a sound leaps over a wall without hindrance. And so I have the wonderful ability to manifest shape after shape and to recite mantra upon mantra. These shapes** I appear in **and these mantras** I recite **dispel the fears of living beings**. They have the power of bestowing fearlessness. **Therefore, throughout the ten directions, in as many lands as there are fine motes of dust, I am known as one who bestows fearlessness.**"

P4 The inconceivable destruction of greed in response to those who seek.

Sutra:

"Third: because I cultivated fundamental, wonderful, perfect penetration and purified the sense-organ, everywhere I go in any world I can make it so that living beings renounce their physical and material valuables to seek my sympathy.

Commentary:

"Third: because I cultivated fundamental, wonderful, perfect penetration and purified the sense-organ…" He is referring to the fundamental purity of the ear-organ – the hearing nature. "**…Everywhere I go in any world I can make it so that living beings renounce their physical and material valuables to seek my sympathy.** They will give up their very bodies and lives and their valuable possessions in search of my aid."

P5 The inconceivable offerings to Buddhas and aid to living beings.

Sutra:

"Fourth: I obtained the Buddhas' mind and was certified as having attained the ultimate end, and so I can make offerings of

rare treasures to the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions and to living beings in the six paths throughout the Dharma Realm.

Commentary:

The **fourth** inconceivable and effortless, wonderful virtue: "**I obtained the Buddhas' mind and was certified as having attained the ultimate end.** I obtained the true mind of the Treasury of the Thus Come One." "Ultimate end" means the final fruition of Buddhahood. "**And so I can make offerings of rare treasures to the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions and to living beings in the six paths throughout the Dharma Realm.** Whatever they want, I will fulfill their wishes."

Sutra:

"If they seek a spouse, they obtain a spouse. If they seek children, they can have children. Seeking samadhi, they obtain samadhi; seeking long life, they obtain long life, and so forth to the extent that if they seek the great Nirvana, they obtain great Nirvana.

Commentary:

Whatever living beings in the six paths wish will be granted them. Gwan Yin Bodhisattva realizes that everyone wants a good spouse, so **"If they seek a spouse, they obtain a spouse."** If they want a good wife, they will find a beautiful one. That's the foremost wish of living beings. Once they have a spouse, they hope for good children. So the second thing Gwan Yin Bodhisattva does is grant children. **"If they seek children, they can have children."** If they want sons, they get sons. If they wish for daughters, they will have daughters. Third, he says, **"Seeking samadhi, they obtain samadhi; seeking long life, they obtain long life."** If one has a wife and children and still feels that there is no meaning to human life and so brings forth a resolve to transcend the world and seek samadhi, then one can attain samadhi. Some are seeking long life, and so they obtain long life. They want to become immortal and never die, and they are able to do so. **"And so forth to the extent that if they seek the great Nirvana, they obtain great Nirvana."**

If beings seek to become a Buddha, they can attain the fruition of Buddhahood.

M4 He concludes his answer about accomplishing perfect penetration.

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. From the gateway of the ear, I obtained a perfect and illumining samadhi. The conditioned mind was at ease, and therefore I entered the appearance of the flow, and obtaining samadhi, I accomplished Bodhi. This is the foremost method.

Commentary:

“**The Buddha asks about perfect penetration.** The Buddha asks all his disciples how they first obtained the expedient of perfect penetration. **From the gateway of the ear, I obtained a perfect and illumining samadhi.** I cultivated the nature of hearing and accomplished samadhi-power. **The conditioned mind was at ease, and therefore I entered the appearance of the flow, and obtaining samadhi, I accomplished Bodhi. This is the foremost method.** The mind that climbs on conditions was gone, and I attained self-mastery. I returned the hearing to hear the self-nature, and the nature accomplished the unsurpassed Way. This is the best method.”

Sutra:

“World Honored One, that Buddha, the Thus Come One, praised me as having obtained well the dharma-door of perfect penetration. In the great assembly he bestowed a prediction upon me and the name, Gwan Shr Yin.

Commentary:

“World Honored One, that Buddha, the Thus Come One, praised me as having obtained well the dharma-door of perfect penetration.” “That Buddha” refers to the Gwan Shr Yin Thus Come One of old. “He praised the ease with which I obtained perfect penetration. **In the great assembly he bestowed a**

prediction upon me and the name, Gwan Shr Yin. He named me 'Contemplator of the Worlds' Sounds,' the same name he had himself."

Sutra:

"Because my contemplation and listening is perfectly clear throughout the ten directions, the name Gwan Shr Yin pervades all the realms of the ten directions."

Commentary:

"**Because my contemplation and listening is perfectly clear throughout the ten directions –** that is, because every place throughout the ten directions, to the bounds of the Dharma Realm, came together, and I experienced a perfect clarity – therefore, **the name Gwan Shr Yin pervades all the realms of the ten directions.** In every Buddhaland through-out the ten directions the name Gwan Shr Yin is known."

K3 The Buddha manifests portents in response.

Sutra:

Then the World Honored One upon the Lion's Throne emitted simultaneously from his five extremities a precious light which shone far throughout the ten directions to anoint the crowns of as many Thus Come Ones and Dharma-Prince Bodhisattvas as there are motes of dust.

Commentary:

Then the World Honored One upon the Lion's Throne emitted simultaneously from his five extremities a precious light. Sitting on the Lion's Throne, Shakyamuni Buddha emitted light from his two hands, his two feet, and the top of his head, all at the same time. The light **shone far throughout the ten directions to anoint the crowns of as many Thus Come Ones and Dharma-Prince Bodhisattvas as there are motes of dust.** Shakyamuni Buddha anointed the crowns of the Thus Come Ones as a representation that his Dharma is the highest, the "summit." The Way of all

Buddhas is the same. The Thus Come Ones of the ten directions also proclaim this "Summit" Dharma, just as Shakyamuni Buddha is doing now.

The Way of All Buddhas is the same.
It is mutually interpenetrating.

L1 He shows the general appearance of perfect penetration.

Sutra:

All those Thus Come Ones also emitted from their five extremities precious lights which were as numerous as motes of dust and which came from the various directions to anoint the crown of the Buddha as well as the crowns of all the great Bodhisattvas and Arhats in the assembly.

Commentary:

All those Thus Come Ones as numerous as the fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions **also emitted from their five extremities precious lights which were as numerous as motes of dust and which came from the various directions.** Precious light also issued forth from their two hands, two feet, and from the tops of their heads, light just like that which Shakyamuni Buddha had emitted. The light came **to anoint the crown of the Buddha –** Shakyamuni Buddha – **as well as the crowns of all the great Bodhisattvas and Arhats in the assembly.**

L2 He shows the specific appearance of perfect penetration.

Sutra:

Groves, trees, pools, and ponds all proclaimed the sound of Dharma. The lights blended and criss-crossed like a jeweled silken net. It was an unprecedented event for everyone in the great assembly, and they all attained the Vajra Samadhi.

Commentary:

Groves, trees, pools, and ponds all proclaimed the sound of Dharma. The flowing water, the breath of wind, and the rustle of

the trees all expressed the Dharma. **The lights blended and criss-crossed like a jeweled silken net.** The lights of the Buddhas of the ten directions anointed Shakyamuni Buddha's crown and Shakyamuni Buddha's light anointed the Thus Come Ones in the ten directions as numerous as motes of dust. The lights' pattern appeared to create a magnificent net. **It was an unprecedented event for everyone in the great assembly, and they all attained the Vajra Samadhi.** They had never before seen such auspicious portents, and everyone there obtained the Vajra Samadhi.

Sutra:

Then the heavens rained down hundreds of precious lotus flowers of variegated combinations of green, yellow, red, and white. All the space in the ten directions turned the colors of the seven gems.

Commentary:

Then, when everyone in the Great Assembly attained the Vajra Samadhi, **the heavens rained down hundreds of precious lotus flowers of variegated combinations of green, yellow, red, and white.** These four colors appeared in various combinations on the petals of the lotus flowers. Some green lotuses were accented with touches of yellow. Some yellow lotuses had red dots on them. Some white lotuses were flecked with red. **All the space in the ten directions turned the colors of the seven gems.** The seven gems are gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, mother-of-pearl, red pearl, and carnelian. All the worlds turned these colors.

Sutra:

This Saha world with its mountains, rivers, and great earth disappeared totally, and all that could be seen were lands as numerous as motes of dust coming together as one realm. Pure praises in songs and chants spontaneously pervaded in celebration.

Commentary:

This Saha world with its mountains, rivers, and great earth disappeared totally, and all that could be seen were lands as numerous as motes of dust coming together as one realm. Our world is called the Saha World. The name means “Able to be Endured,” representing that living beings are able to bear the suffering and distress of this world. Actually, it’s unbearable, but beings go right on bearing it, not admitting the suffering. They take suffering to be bliss. They think it’s fine here.

At this point, however, the Saha World disappeared. That was due to the transforming power of spiritual penetrations which Shakyamuni Buddha used in that assembly. The Buddhalands as numerous as grains of sand multiplied by grains of sand united. They had been distinct and individual, but now they came together as one. **Pure praises in songs and chants spontaneously pervaded in celebration.** Pure and clear sounds of music were heard everywhere. Before this, the groves and trees, the ponds and pools had expressed the Dharma, but in this place everything proclaimed the Dharma-sound in subtle songs and chants.

The water flows, the wind blows,
proclaiming the Mahayana.
In pools of seven jewels are lotuses
of four colors and waves of solid gold.

Chapter 3

Manjushri Selects the Organ of Entry

J3 The Buddha instructs Manjushri to select one.
K1 The Thus Come One instructs him to select.
L1 He first explains that all descriptions are equal.

Sutra:

Then the Thus Come One said to Dharma-Prince Manjushri, "You should now contemplate these twenty-five great Bodhisattvas and Arhats who are beyond study.

"Each has explained the initial expedient in his accomplishment of the Way. All say they have cultivated to true and actual perfect penetration. Their cultivation is equal without distinctions of superior and inferior or earlier and later.

Commentary:

Then the Thus Come One, Shakyamuni, **said to Dharma-Prince Manjushri, "You should now contemplate these twenty-five great Bodhisattvas and Arhats who are beyond study."** Take a look now; reflect on the Dharma-door which each of these twenty-five sages used. "Beyond study" refers to those who have been certified to Fourth-stage Arhatship or above. **"Each has explained the initial expedient in his accomplishment of the Way. All say they have cultivated to true and actual perfect**

penetration." They attained genuine, perfect penetration of the sense-organs. **Their cultivation is equal without distinctions of superior and inferior or earlier and later.** In fact, there is no way to distinguish them as better or worse, excellent or deficient, or more or less advanced.

L2 His reason for asking him to select one.

Sutra:

"I now wish to cause Ananda to become enlightened, and so I ask which of these twenty-five practices is appropriate to his faculties, and which will be, after my extinction, the easiest expedient door for living beings of this realm to enter in order to accomplish the Bodhisattva vehicle and seek the unsurpassed Way."

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha says, "**I now wish to cause Ananda to become enlightened.** Ananda is still a First-stage Arhat. I'd like him to become enlightened and attain the second, third, or fourth fruition of Arhatship, **and so I ask which of these twenty-five practices is appropriate to his faculties.** Which one is right for someone with Ananda's abilities? There are eighteen realms and seven elements; which Dharma-door is most appropriate for Amanda? **And which will be, after my extinction, the easiest expedient door for living beings of this realm to enter in order to accomplish the Bodhisattva vehicle and seek the unsurpassed Way."** The living beings referred to here are us. We at the Buddhist Lecture hearing this Dharma are just the ones he means. You who read this Sutra now are also included. So don't set yourself apart and say, "I'm not included." You'll just mess yourself up that way. If you put yourself outside, you will fall in the future, and if you become a horse, cow, dog, chicken, or pig, it won't be easy to get to listen to the *Shurangama Sutra*. For one thing, you'd never make it up the four flights of stairs to the Lecture Hall: In Hong Kong, ducks came to listen to my Sutra lectures, but that was on the ground floor.

Long ago, Shakyamuni Buddha arranged our seats in this Dharma assembly that is now taking place. Don't take yourselves too lightly. Of course, if you don't come to listen now, you won't have a share. "Which of these Dharma-doors will be found most expedient by living beings of the future who have great faculties and who in every thought seek the unsurpassed Way?" the Buddha asks Manjushri Bodhisattva. "Which Dharma-door will most easily bring success? Manjushri Bodhisattva, set your mind to it and select one."

K2 Manjushri responds with a verse.
L1 He prepares to speak the verse.

Sutra:

Dharma Prince, Manjushri, receiving the Buddha's compassionate instruction, arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and, basing himself on the Buddha's awesome spirit, spoke verses to the Buddha.

Commentary:

Dharma Prince, Manjushri, receiving the Buddha's compassionate instruction, arose from his seat. Wonderfully Lucky Bodhisattva was directed by the Buddha to select from any of the eighteen realms and seven elements a method of attaining perfect penetration. He was to find the one most appropriate for Ananda and for us to cultivate. The six sense-organs, the six sense-objects, and the six consciousnesses make up the Eighteen Realms. Earth, wind, fire, and water, along with emptiness, consciousness, and perception are the Seven Elements, as was explained in detail previous

Receiving this compassionate instruction from the Buddha, Manjushri Bodhisattva arose from his seat, **bowed at the Buddha's feet, and, basing himself on the Buddha's awesome spirit, spoke verses to the Buddha.** The Bodhisattvas and Arhats all have places to sit around the Buddha, unlike Fire Head Vajra, who must stand in the assembly. Verses can vary in number of feet and lines, but they all contain the principles of the Sutra.

L2 He speaks the verse.
M1 He brings the source up to introduce his selection.
N1 He shows two sources.

Sutra:

> ***"The sea of enlightenment in nature***
> ***is perfect and clear.***
> ***Complete, distinct Bodhi is a miraculous source.***
> ***But when basic brightness shone***
> ***so that objects appeared,***
> ***With objects' existence,***
> ***the nature's brilliance ceased.***

Commentary:

"The sea of enlightenment in nature is perfect and clear." The Sea of Enlightenment is boundless, containing within it all the mountains, rivers, and great earth, the vegetation and myriad appearances. The nature of the sea of enlightenment is both clean and perfect. **"Complete, distinct Bodhi is a miraculous source."** The clarity of perfection of the Sea of Enlightenment is fundamentally subtle and wonderful. But within this subtlety of a single truth, falseness arises, and the light reveals the arising of objects. **"But when basic brightness shone so that objects appeared. With objects' existence, the nature's brilliance ceased."** Basically, the Sea of Enlightenment contains every-thing within it. There is nothing which is not in the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. But as soon as there is a single ignorant thought, a falseness arises. Once there is falseness, there are objects – defiling appearances. Be-cause of this falseness, the inherent light of the enlightened nature does not shine forth – just as when the sky is covered by clouds.

N2 He discusses production and extinction.

Sutra:

> ***"Confusion and falseness bring about emptiness.***
> ***Relying on emptiness, time and space take form.***

> ***Thoughts settle, making countries and lands.***
> ***What knows and feels becomes living beings.***

Commentary:

"Confusion and falseness bring about emptiness." Because of falseness, subject and object come into being. Basically, both aspects are false. In the substance of the Sea of Enlightenment not a single dharma stands. There isn't anything at all. But, "Staring produces the appearance of fatigue." After a sustained period of time, protraction brings about fatigue. And then a falseness and confusion give rise to emptiness. In the Sea of Enlightenment there isn't anything – not even emptiness. The verse says below:

> *The emptiness created within enlightenment*
> *is like a single bubble in all the sea.*

How insignificant that is! And yet, we think of emptiness as being so vast. **"Relying on emptiness, time and space take form."** The ten directions and three periods of time come into being. **"Thoughts settle, making countries and lands."** Once time and space arise out of emptiness, then false thinking becomes solid, making the lands. **"What knows and feels becomes living beings."** Knowledge and sensations turn into living creatures.

Sutra:

> ***"The emptiness created within Great Enlightenment,***
> ***Is like a single bubble in all the sea.***
> ***Lands like fine dust motes, subject to outflows,***
> ***All come forth out of empty space.***
> ***Just as the bubble bursts, space is no longer there.***
> ***How much the less the three states of being!***

Commentary:

The first lines of the verse said, "The Sea of Enlightenment in nature is perfect and clear/complete, distinct Bodhi is a miraculous source." The perfection of the pure source of Bodhi is extremely wonderful. Now the verse speaks of **"The emptiness created**

within Great Enlightenment." We all are aware of the existence of emptiness, but do we know where it came from? I believe no one knows. That's because emptiness is so vast. It's impossible to know the limits of empty space or its source. Who is the mother of emptiness? No one knows. But now the *Shurangama Sutra* points to the source. Emptiness is born from the nature of Great Enlightenment. And yet within that expanse it is extremely minute. How big is it? It **"is like a single bubble in all the sea." –** like a little fleck of foam in the ocean.

"Lands like fine dust motes, subject to outflows. All come forth out of empty space." There are three categories of outflows:

1. Outflows of desire;
2. Outflows of existence;
3. Outflows of ignorance.

Myriad lands which have outflows all come out of emptiness. The emptiness came out of enlightenment, and the lands came out of emptiness. **"Just as the bubble bursts, space is no longer there."** In the same way that a bubble pops on the ocean, the emptiness disappears in the great enlightenment. **"How much the less the three states of being!"**

N3 He makes clear there must be a selection.

Sutra:

"Returning to the source, the nature is not two.
Many are the entrances through expedients;
none of them does the sagely nature
fail to go through.
Compliant or adverse, all is expedient.
First resolve and entering samadhi,
come slow or fast as there are different norms.

Commentary:

In is verse, Manjushri Bodhisattva says that emptiness is like a bubble in the Sea of Enlightenment, and that countries and lands

within the emptiness are also extremely minute. If emptiness disappears, all the countries and lands, the mountains, rivers, and the great earth, and the sentient and material worlds all disappear as well.

When one cultivates this Dharma-door, **“Returning to the source, the nature is not two.”** “Returning to the source” means accomplishing Buddhahood. There is only one place to return to, and that is your original home. This world we people live in is not really our home. “I have a home,” you protest. But that house is not your genuine home. To become a Buddha is to find your genuine home. Before you become a Buddha, you are a vagabond moving from hotel to hotel. You are always on the move.

“Many are the entrances through expedients;” Being “expedient” means being unattached. For example, once there was a child crawling toward a well which was flush with the ground. If the child had continued, it would have fallen into the well. The Buddha saw this, but he knew that if he called the child back, it would not have listened, but would have continued to crawl forward. So he made a fist with one hand, held it out, and called, “Child, come back.’ I have candy in my hand for you.’ I have candy. Do you like candy?” When the child heard there was candy, it turned around and came back. There was no candy in the Buddha’s hand after all. But was the Buddha lying? No. That is an example of an expedient method. He used his “empty fist to save the child” because there was no other method that would have worked at that point. The doors of expedients are uncountable. In general, whatever method will save a person is the Dharma-door you use.

“None of them does the sagely nature fail to go through. Compliant or adverse, all is expedient.” When you are certified to the Dharma-nature of a sage, there is nothing you cannot understand. What is compliant is expedient, and what is adverse is also expedient. Whatever complies with your abilities and circumstances, you can use in your cultivation. What is “adverse” – not in

accord with your situation – can still be applied to your cultivation. Both the compliant situations and the adverse ones in which you cultivate are the expedient Dharma-doors.

“First resolve and entering samadhi, come slow or fast as there are different norms.” Some cultivate more quickly, some more slowly. So they can’t all be lumped together.

M2 He examines each door.
N1 He examines the six defiling objects.

Sutra:

“Form and thought combined become the ‘dust.’
Their essence is not discernible.
How can one use what lacks clarity,
And expect to gain perfect penetration?

Commentary:

Form is created from false thinking. **“Form and thought combined become the ‘dust.’”** the defiling objects of form; **“Their essence is not discernible.”** It is not clear and comprehensible. **“How can one use what lacks clarity / And expect to gain perfect penetration?”** Can you expect to attain the Dharma-door of perfect penetration with a method that is neither clear nor ultimate? That is impossible. The verse goes on to say that using the sense-object of form to cultivate perfect penetration is not the best method. Some people are able to be certified to the fruition through this method, but only because they have special conditions with that particular Dharma-door. It is not something that most people can cultivate.

Sutra:

“In sounds, language is intermingled.
But the meaning in a word, a name, a phrase,
Is such that no single one can include them all.
How can this bring perfect penetration?

Commentary:

There are those who awaken to the Way be means of the defiling object of sounds. Nevertheless, **"In sounds, language is intermingled / But the meaning in a word, a name, a phrase / Is such that no single one can include them all."** No one word or one name or one phrase can say everything about everything. **"How can this bring perfect penetration?"** One cannot choose sounds as the way to attain perfect penetration.

Sutra:

"Awareness of smells comes
through contact with them.
Apart from them,
one does not know that they exist.
Since sensation of them is not constant,
How can one reach perfect penetration?

Commentary:

The Pure Youth Adorned with Fragrance awakened to the Way by means of the defiling object of smells. But **"Awareness of smells comes through contact with them."** The nose must inhale the vapors of a scent for it to be aware of them. **"Apart from them, one does not know that they exist."** They are not there. **"Since sensation of them is not constant / How can one reach perfect penetration?"** Since the nature of smells is not constant or unchanging, one does not always have an awareness of them, and so they can't count as the best method for perfect penetration.

Sutra:

"Flavors are not to us fundamental.
They only exist when there is something to taste.
Since this sensation is not perpetual,
How can one derive perfect penetration?

Commentary:

Although there are those who awaken to the Way by means of the defiling object of flavors, **"Flavors are not to us fundamental."** The nature of flavors is not the complete and perfect self-mature. **"They only exist when there is something to taste."** It's only when there is something with flavor that the defiling object of flavor comes to be. **"Since this sensation is not perpetual / How can one derive perfect penetration?"** The awareness of tastes is not there all the time. Therefore, don't select this Dharma-door as the one for perfect penetration.

Sutra:

"Touch becomes clear
only when something is touched.
Without an object there can be no contact.
With fluctuation between contact and separation,
How can one gain perfect penetration?

Commentary:

"Touch becomes clear only when something is touched." Although there are those who awaken to the Way by cultivating the objects of touch, touch can only be known when there is an object to come In contact with. **"Without an object there can be no contact."** The only way contact can be experienced is for there to be someone who makes contact with some object. **"With fluctuation between contact and separation / How can one gain perfect penetration?"** Therefore, the defiling object of touch cannot be used, either, as the most effective Dharma door for perfect penetration.

Sutra:

"Dharmas are known as 'internal dust.'
Reckoned as 'dust,'
they are certainly sense objects.
Involvement of subject and object

cannot be pervasive;
How then can they lead to perfect penetration?

Commentary:

Mahakashyapa cultivated the mind through dharma-objects, and he attained the Samadhi of the Extinction of Feeling and Thought. **"Dharmas are known as 'internal dust.'"** Dharmas are conditions of the mind. **"Reckoned as 'dust,' they are certainly sense objects."** Since they are defiling objects, they have a location. Since they have a location, they are not at the level of "non-existence and yet not non-existent." **"Involvement of subject and object cannot be pervasive."** An interaction involving subject and object is not full and complete, not all-pervasive. **"How then can they lead to perfect penetration?"**

N2 Examining the five organs.

Sutra:

"Although seeing itself is clear and penetrating,
Making bright what is before one,
it cannot shine behind.
Ever reaching only half the four directions,
How can it manifest perfect penetration?

Commentary:

"Although seeing itself is clear and penetrating": the eyes' ability to see is bright and clear, but, **"Making bright what is before one, it cannot shine behind."** If it looks in front, it cannot see behind. If it looks left, it cannot see to the right. **"Ever reaching only half the four directions"**: it can only see two of four sides at any one time. **"How can it manifest perfect penetration?"** It is not the one to choose for perfect penetration.

Sutra:

"The nose's breath penetrates in and out.
But in the rests between there is no air.

These interruptions render it inconsistent.
How can one use it for perfect penetration?

Commentary:

"The nose's breath penetrates in and out." This stanza discusses the organ of the nose. **"But in the rests between there is no air."** Sometimes the breath stops. There are pauses. **"These interruptions render it inconsistent."** This aspect is a deficiency and makes this organ inadequate also. It is not all-pervasive. **"How can one use it for perfect penetration?"** Therefore, this one cannot be selected for perfect penetration, either.

Sutra:

"The tongue is not an organ apart from cause;
Flavors form the source of its sensation.
When flavors cease, it knows nothing at all.
How can it attain perfect penetration?

Commentary:

"The tongue is not an organ apart from cause." Flavors must enter in upon the tongue for it to experience sensation. Without flavors, it lacks any awareness. **"Flavors form the source of its sensation."** It experiences sensations because of the defiling object of flavor. **"When flavors cease, it knows nothing at all / How can it attain perfect penetration?"** You cannot use it to reach perfect penetration.

Sutra:

"It is the same for the body as for objects of touch.
Neither can be regarded as a perfect awareness.
With defined and limited invisible divisions,
How can it be used for perfect penetration?

Commentary:

"It is the same for the body as for objects of touch." The Dharma-door of the body is like the objects of touch. **"Neither can be regarded as a perfect awareness."** Its awareness is not

complete in itself. **"With defined and limited invisible divisions / How can it be used for perfect penetration?"** It is characterized by boundaries and number, and it is invisibly connected with objects of touch, and therefore it is not an appropriate choice for perfect penetration.

Sutra:

> ***"The mind's knowledge is a mass of deliberations.***
> ***What it perceives is never profound insight.***
> ***Unable to get beyond reflection and thought,***
> ***How can it reveal perfect penetration?***

Commentary:

"The mind's knowledge is a mass of deliberations." What the mind knows are mental dharmas – defiling objects of mind, a conglomeration of random thoughts. **"What it perceives is never profound insight / Unable to get beyond reflection and thought / How can it reveal perfect penetration?"** It can never get to what is tranquil and profound; it can never reach what is ultimate, because one can never get beyond it as long as thought – false thinking and the stream of consciousness – remains. How can this lead to perfect penetration?

N3 Examining the six consciousnesses.

Sutra:

> ***"The seeing-consciousness combines three aspects.***
> ***Probe its origin: it has no appearance.***
> ***Since its very substance is variable,***
> ***How can it bring perfect penetration?***

Commentary:

"The seeing-consciousness combines three aspects." The verse now discusses the consciousnesses, which are a combination of the six sense-organs inside and the six sense objects outside. The six sense-organs have awareness, while the six sense-objects do not. Therefore, the six sense consciousnesses should be half-aware

and half-unaware. These three aspects combine into the consciousnesses. **"Probe its origin: it has no appearance."** The consciousness has no appearance. **"Since its very substance is variable, how can it bring perfect penetration?"** Since the consciousness itself is in a state of flux, how can you use it to gain perfect penetration? So the eye-consciousness won't work, either.

Sutra:

> ***"The heart of hearing penetrates the ten directions.***
> ***When borne on the strength of great causes,***
> ***Those of initial resolve cannot enter this way.***
> ***How can one expect to gain perfect penetration?***

Commentary:

"The heart of hearing penetrates the ten directions." The Dharma-door that Universal Worthy Bodhisattva cultivated was the ear-consciousness. But hearing is pervasive only **"When borne on the strength of great causes."** This Dharmadoor requires the power of great and awesome causes. Only then can one cultivate it. **"Those of initial resolve cannot enter this way."** Beings with initial resolve to cultivate the Bodhisattva Way will not find this Dharma-door appropriate. Since those of initial resolve cannot enter it, how could it be selected for perfect penetration? **"How can one expect to gain perfect penetration?"** This one won't do, either.

Sutra:

> ***"Reflecting on the nose is a provisional method.***
> ***It only serves to gather in and settle the mind.***
> ***Once settled, the mind is simply still.***
> ***How can that be perfect penetration?***

Commentary:

"Reflecting on the nose is a provisional method." Sundrananda cultivated the white spot at the tip of his nose. The cultivation of this Dharma-door involves thought, and so it is a clever provisional expedient. **"It only serves to gather in and**

settle the mind.” It is to help quiet a scattered mind. **“Once settled, the mind is simply still.”** Its aim is to bring the mind to dwell in one place, but since there continues to be a dwelling-place for the mind, **“How can that be perfect penetration?”** It is not the one to pick.

Sutra:

“Speaking Dharma
through the medium of language,
Is enlightened to by those
of former accomplishment.
But words and phrases are not free of outflows.
How can this make perfect penetration?

Commentary:

Purnamaitreyaniputra spoke the Dharma and awakened by means of the tongue, **“Speaking Dharma through the medium of language.”** In speaking Dharma and lecturing Sutras, one’s voice must be good and one must be accomplished in expressing oneself in language. Then it **“Is enlightened to by those of former accomplishment / But words and phrases are not free of outflows / How can this make perfect penetration?”** Since they are subject to outflows, they cannot be selected for the Dharma-door of perfect penetration.

Sutra:

“Refraining from transgressions
only controls the body.
Lacking a body, there is nothing to restrain.
Since its source is not all-pervasive,
How can it bring perfect penetration?

Commentary:

The Venerable Upali held the precepts. **“Refraining from transgressions only controls the body.”** Both the upholding of precepts and the violation of precepts is done with the body. This is

a Dharma-door that relates to body and mind. **“Lacking a body, there is nothing to restrain.”** If you didn’t have a physical body, there would be no need to control it. **“Since its source is not all-pervasive / How can it bring perfect penetration?”** This Dharma-door is not all-encompassing. It cannot be chosen as the method for perfect penetration, either.

Sutra:

“Spiritual penetrations are based on past causes.
What connection have they
with distinguishing dharmas?
Conditioned thought is not apart from things.
How can one attain perfect penetration?

Commentary:

Maudgalyayana was foremost in spiritual penetrations, and it was from the mind-consciousness that he accomplished his spiritual powers. **“Spiritual penetrations are based on past causes.”** Possession of spiritual powers comes from causes and conditions set up in past lives. **“What connection have they with distinguishing dharmas?”** They are a different thing from discrimination. **“Conditioned thought is not apart from things.”** Spiritual penetrations still require the thought process, however, and therefore they are not divorced from the material plane – they are not complete in themselves. **“How can one attain perfect penetration?”** Cultivation through spiritual penetrations is also not the way to go.

N4 Examining the seven elements.

Sutra:

“One may contemplate the nature of earth,
But it is firm and solid, not penetrable.
What is conditioned is not the sagely nature.
How can one use it for perfect penetration?

Commentary:

"One may contemplate the nature of earth / But it is firm and solid, not penetrable." Maintaining the Earth Bodhisattva made use of the Dharma-door of contemplating the earth. Earth has the qualities of solidity and firmness. It is not penetrable. It is a conditioned dharma, not a Dharma-door for entering the flow of the sages. **"What is conditioned is not the sagely nature / How can one use it for perfect penetration?"** It doesn't measure up as the best Dharma-door for perfect penetration.

Sutra:

"One may contemplate the nature of water,
But such mental reflection is not the true and real.
This state of suchness is not an enlightened view.
How can it give perfect penetration?

Commentary:

One may decide to cultivate by the contemplation of water and enter the Water-Contemplation Samadhi, as did the Pure Youth Moonlight. **"One may contemplate the nature of water / But such mental reflection is not the true and real."** For one to enter samadhi according to this method, the thought process, a contemplative consideration, is also initially involved. **"This state of suchness is not an enlightened view."** It is not a natural, spontaneous kind of contemplation. **"How cn it give perfect penetration?"** So the contemplation of water cannot be considered the method for perfect penetration.

Sutra:

"One may contemplate the nature of fire,
But admitting dislike is not true renunciation.
This expedient cannot be one for beginners.
How can one use it for perfect penetration?

Commentary:

Fire Head Vajra, Ucchushma, cultivated the contemplation of fire, because he had a tremendous amount of desire. The Buddha instructed him to contemplate the fire of desire in his body. **"One may contemplate the nature of fire / But admitting dislike is not true renunciation."** His decision to reject this was not in itself genuine abandoning. **"This expedient cannot be one for beginners."** It is not a skill-in-means appropriate to those of initial resolve. **"How can one use it for perfect penetration?"** It cannot be selected as the Dharma-door for perfect penetration.

Sutra:

> ***"One may contemplate the nature of wind,***
> ***But movement and stillness are not non-dual.***
> ***Duality cannot bring highest enlightenment.***
> ***How can one expect perfect penetration?***

Commentary:

The Dharma Prince Crystal Light used the element wind in his cultivation. **"One may contemplate the nature of wind / But movement and stillness are not non-dual."** Movement and stillness are opposites; they are not absolutes. **"Duality cannot bring highest enlightenment."** Opposites are not the dharma of unsurpassed enlightenment. **"How can one expect perfect penetration?"** You can't pick this one for the Dharma-door to perfect penetration.

Sutra:

> ***"One may contemplate the nature of emptiness.***
> ***But, its aspect is murky and dull;***
> ***it lacks awareness.***
> ***What is unaware is different from Bodhi.***
> ***How can it bring perfect penetration?***

Commentary:

"One may contemplate the nature of emptiness." Empty Space Treasury Bodhisattva cultivated a body as boundless as emptiness and awakened to the Way. But Manjushri Bodhisattva says here, "I contemplate the nature of emptiness and see that **"its aspect is murky and dull; it lacks awareness."** This lack of clarity makes it not an appropriate initial method for enlightenment. **"What is unaware is different from Bodhi / How can it bring perfect penetration?"** This one can't be picked as a method to gain perfect penetration.

Sutra:

"One may contemplate
the nature of consciousness;
But one is regarding a consciousness
that is not eternal.
Even the thought of it is empty and false.
How can one get perfect penetration?

Commentary:

Maitreya Bodhisattva cultivated the element of consciousness. He contemplated the nature of consciousness. **"One may contemplate the nature of consciousness / But one is regarding a consciousness that is not eternal."** Take a look at the consciousness of the discriminating mind; it is not everlasting. **"Even the thought of it is empty and false."** Where there is something contemplated, and a thought of contemplation, they are empty and false. **"How can one get perfect penetration?"** So it cannot be considered perfectly penetrating.

Sutra:

"All activities are impermanent.
So, too, mindfulness has its origin
in rising and ceasing.
Since cause and effect

go beyond cause and effect,
How can we use it for perfect penetration?

Commentary:

Great Strength Bodhisattva cultivated the element of perception. He "gathered in all six organs until a pure mindfulness linked them together." **"All activities are impermanent / So, too, mindfulness has its origin in rising and ceasing."** Both the nature of the recitation and that which is recited are dharmas subject to production and extinction. When you are reciting, it arises; when you cease reciting, it is extinguished. **"Since cause and effect go beyond cause and effect"** we seek to go beyond what is subject to cause and effect. **"How can we use it for perfect penetration?"** So the Dharma-door of mindfulness of the Buddha is not best suited for perfect penetration.

M3 He selects only the ear organ.
N1 He reveals the wonder of this dharma-door.
O1 The ear organ is beneficial for those of this world to cultivate.

Sutra:

"I now say this, World Honored One,
Buddha, who has revealed the Saha world:
In this land the true substance of teaching
Resides in hearing the sounds purely.
If one wants to attain samadhi,
hearing is the best way to enter.

Commentary:

At this point Manjushri Bodhisattva has finished speaking about the various Dharma-doors by which the sages were certified. He continues, **"I now say this, World Honored One / Buddha, who has revealed the Saha world / In this land the true substance of teaching / Resides in hearing the sounds purely."** In this world which is "Able to be Borne," where the Buddha has compassionately become manifest, the genuine method for teaching and transforming living beings is in the purity of sound.

That refers to the Dharma-door of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature. **"If one wants to attain samadhi / hearing is the best way to enter."** The skill of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature is actually the most wonderful, the best method.

O2 The dharma is used by a superior person.
P1 General praise of its benefit to self.

Sutra:

"Apart from suffering, liberation is found.
How excellent is he who contemplates
the world's sounds!

Commentary:

"Apart from suffering, liberation is found." One can separate from suffering and attain liberation. Separating from suffering is just liberation; liberation is just leaving suffering behind. **"How excellent is he who contemplates the world's sounds!"** Ah, the Dharma-door of Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva is so fine!

P2 Broadly reveals its benefits to others.

Sutra:

"Throughout kalpas as numerous
as Ganges' sands,
He enters Buddhalands
as many as fine dust motes.
Obtaining great power of self-mastery,
He bestows fearlessness on living beings.

Commentary:

Why does he praise Gwan Shr Yin? **"Throughout kalpas as numerous as Ganges' sands / He enters Buddhalands as many as fine dust motes."** During that many aeons, Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva goes to countless Buddhalands as numerous as fine motes of dust. **"Obtaining great power of self-mastery / He**

bestows fearlessness on living beings.” With spiritual power and great ease, he causes living beings not to be afraid.

Sutra:

> ***“Wonderful is the sound of Gwan Shr Yin,***
> ***A pure sound, like the ocean’s roar.***
> ***He saves the world***
> ***and brings peace to all within it.***
> ***He has transcended the world,***
> ***and his attainment is eternal.***

Commentary:

“Wonderful is the sound of Gwan Shr Yin.” Gwan Yin Bodhisattva is extremely miraculous. **“A pure sound, like the ocean’s roar.”** His pure and clear sound is like the thunder of the sea: a single, all-pervasive sound. **“He saves the world and brings peace to all within it.”** He rescues those in the world so that all living beings attain peace and contentment. **“He has transcended the world, and his attainment is eternal.”** He transcends the world and attains the everlasting enlightenment. He realizes eternal, indestructible, comfortable spiritual powers.

O3 Reveals that his dharma is true and actual.
P1 True and actual perfection.

Sutra:

> ***“I now make this report, 0 Thus Come One,***
> ***regarding what Gwan Yin has just explained:***
> ***It is like someone in a quiet place***
> ***When drums are rolled***
> ***throughout the ten directions,***
> ***Hearing at once the sounds from all ten places.***
> ***This, then, is the actual true perfection.***

Commentary:

“I now make this report, 0 Thus Come One / regarding what Gwan Yin has just explained about his experience with perfect

penetration: **It is like someone in a quiet place / When drums are rolled throughout the ten directions / Hearing at once the sounds from all ten places."** In every one of the ten directions drums are beaten simultaneously. Although the drum-sounds come from ten places, the one person in the quiet room can hear them all at the same time. **"This, then, is the actual true perfection."** This nature is genuinely perfect.

P2 True and actual penetration.

Sutra:

> ***"The eyes cannot see through solid forms.***
> ***Mouth and nose are much the same.***
> ***The body registers awareness only through contact.***
> ***Tangled in thoughts,***
> ***the mind lacks clear connections.***

Commentary:

"The eyes cannot see through solid forms." "The eyes" here are not the Buddha Eye, the Wisdom Eye, the Dharma Eye, the Heavenly Eye, or the Flesh Eye – not the Five Eyes. What is referred to here are our ordinary physical eyes. These eyes can only see within boundaries; they cannot see through and beyond them. They cannot see through solid objects. For instance, if we close the windows and pull the blinds, we can't see what is outside. Even in perceiving what is close to use, a single layer of skin prohibits our seeing. For instance, we cannot see what is inside our bodies with the ordinary eyes. The eyes of a sage are a different matter, but here we are discussing the capacity of ordinary eyes. They can't even see through a thin piece of paper! Also, when they look to the right they cannot see to the left, and when they look to the left, they cannot see what's on the right. **"Mouth and nose are much the same."** Between breaths there is a hesitation where no air enters or leaves the nose. And the tongue must have some flavor in order to experience taste. Without something to taste, it doesn't function. These two, then, are more or less like the eyes. **"The body**

registers awareness only through contact." The body must come in contact with objects of touch for sensation to be experienced, and so it is not complete in itself either. **"Tangled in thoughts, the mind lacks clear connections."** The mind's thoughts are random and confused, without any order to them, and so they are not best for perfect penetration either.

Sutra:

> ***"Sounds can be heard even through solid walls.***
> ***One can listen to things both near and far.***
> ***None of the other five organs can match this.***
> ***It, then, is penetration true and real.***

Commentary:

With the organ of the ear, **"Sounds can be heard even through solid walls."** You can hear what is going on beyond a wall. **"One can listen to things both near and far / None of the other five organs can match this."** The eyes, nose, tongue, body, and mind are not as effective as the ear – it is more perfect than any of them. Its function Is perfectly fused and unobstructed. The others cannot compare to it. **"It, then, is penetration true and real."** The other five sense organs do not have this kind of genuine penetration.

P3 True and actual constancy.

Sutra:

> ***"The nature of sounds***
>   ***is based in movement and stillness.***
> ***One hears according to whether there is sound.***
> ***With no sound, there is said to be no hearing.***
> ***But this does not mean***
>   ***that the hearing has no nature.***

Commentary:

"The nature of sounds is based in movement and stillness." Sometimes there are sounds; sometimes there is no sound. When there is no sound, there is stillness. **"One hears according to**

whether there is sound." Hearing perceives the movement of sound and the stillness of no sound. **"With no sound, there is said to be no hearing."** That's what we say, **"But this does not mean that the hearing has no nature."** The nature of hearing is definitely not extinguished. When we say there's no hearing, the nature of hearing is in fact not absent.

Sutra:

> ***"In the absence of sound, the nature is not gone.***
> ***Nor does it arise in the presence of sound.***
> ***Entirely beyond production and extinction.***
> ***It is, then, truly everlasting.***

Commentary:

"In the absence of sound, the nature is not gone." The absence of sound does not mean the nature of hearing has ceased to be. **"Nor does it arise in the presence of sound."** When a sound is heard, there is no change in the nature of hearing. **"Entirely beyond production and extinction / It is, then, truly everlasting."** It is complete in itself and divorced from production and extinction. Birth and death become perfectly fused. The nature of hearing is an everlasting, unchanging nature not subject to production and extinction.

Sutra:

> ***"Ever-present, even in dream-thinking,***
> ***It does not disappear***
> ***when conditions and thought are gone.***
> ***Enlightened, this contemplation***
> ***transcends cognition,***
> ***Reaching beyond both the body and the mind.***

Commentary:

In the presence of sound, in the absence of sound, at the arising of sound, and at the cessation of sound, the nature of hearing never ceases to be. People may realize this in an ordinary waking state.

But is also **“Ever-present, even in dream-thinking.”** Someone sleeping soundly may hear the sounds of beating clothes and pounding rice as a drum and bell being struck. This proves that hearing is present even in dreams. **“It does not disappear when conditions and thought are gone.”** It is not like the mind, which doesn’t exist without thoughts. **“Enlightened, this contemplation transcends cognition.”** The enlightened contemplation of the hearing-nature goes beyond thought. **“Reaching beyond both the body and the mind.”** The body and mind cannot compare to the hearing-nature of the organ of the ear.

O4 He shows that this is the appropriate organ to cultivate.
P1 Brings up the substance of the teaching in this land.

Sutra:

“Now, in the Saha world, the theory of sounds
Has been proclaimed and understood.

P2 Makes clear that the sickness lies in following the sounds.

Sutra:

“Living beings are confused
about the source of hearing.
They follow sounds and so they turn and flow.
Ananda’s power to remember was exceptional;
Nonetheless, he fell prey to a deviant plot.
Was it not from heeding sounds
that he was nearly lost?
By turning back the flow,
one will make no such mistake.

Commentary:

“Now, in the Saha world, the theory of sounds / Has been proclaimed and understood / Living beings are confused about the source of hearing.” They don’t understand the inherent hearing-nature. **“They follow sounds and so they turn and flow.”** They cannot turn the hearing back to hear the self-nature. They seek

outside; they listen outside. They pursue the sounds and run outside. If one allows the ear to race out after sounds, instead of returning the hearing, one gets caught up in the flow of birth and death. It is also a knot. There is birth and death, and so there is a knot. And it all starts because you pursue the defiling objects of sound. You can't bring it all back.

"Ananda's power to remember was exceptional." Ananda was always erudite and had a brilliant memory. He could recite by heart all the Sutras in the Tripitaka. **"Nonetheless, he fell prey to a deviant plot."** He was smart, but he couldn't avoid the difficulty brought about by Matangi's daughter and the Former Brahma Heaven Mantra. He was captured by a deviant dharma of an externalist religion. **"Was it not from heeding sounds that he was nearly lost? / By turning back the flow, one will make no such mistake."** If you can turn the hearing back and hear your self-nature, then naturally you will not succumb to any falseness. You won't err like that. The reason Ananda was susceptible to the deception was that he was always seeking outside. He studied this and studied that and was proficient with one Sutra and another, but he never returned the light and illumined within. He never stopped to think about how he so should act or what he was doing. All he did was study. He studied so much that he forgot what he was all about. That reminds me of the answer Confucius gave when someone came to ask him:

"Is there anyone in the world like...?" the questioner began.

"Like what?" asked Confucius.

"Someone who moves, taking everyone with him – all the relatives in the household – except his wife. He forgets to take along his wife. Could there be such a person?"

What do you suppose Confucius answered? Did Confucius say it was impossible for a person to forget his wife? Or that it was not impossible? Confucius said, "Nowadays, people even forget themselves!" Not only could they forget their wives, they could even forget their own bodies. The meaning was that they don't remember

that in the future their bodies will die. They forget they will have to go through old age, sickness, and death.

Since Ananda concentrated on studying things external to himself and on developing his scholastic abilities, he neglected his samadhi-power. Since he neglected samadhi, he didn't know how to develop the skill of turning the hearing back to hear the self-nature, and so he pursued sounds. He did not make the sounds follow his self-nature and so he got caught up in the difficulty with Matangi's daughter.

N2 He explains in detail how to cultivate this skill.
O1 He introduces the teaching of turning back the hearing.

Sutra:

> ***"Ananda, you should listen attentively:***
> ***I rely upon the Buddha's awesome power,***
> ***In describing to you the Vajra King,***
> ***A samadhi inconceivable of likeness to illusions.***
> ***It is the true mother of all Buddhas.***

Commentary:

When Manjushri Bodhisattva had spoken thus far, he called out to **Ananda**. He was a Dharma Prince with longstanding status, while Ananda was comparatively young. Here, Manjushri Bodhisattva is representing Shakyamuni Buddha in speaking the Dharma, and so he gets Ananda's attention. "**You should listen attentively.** Pay attention! Listen to every word; don't be the least bit casual. Don't sit there half asleep while I am speaking this verse! You should understand that this verse I'm speaking is not my own ideas. It is spoken by the power that the Buddha has vested in me. The Buddha indicated that I should speak and express this intent. He told me to select the Dharma for your sake. You shouldn't think that it is I, Manjushri Bodhisattva, who is telling you this; it is the Buddha speaking for you. Now do you understand?

In describing to you the Vajra King. On the Buddha's behalf I will explain the Dharma-door of the Vajra King, **A samadhi inconceivable of likeness to illusions / It is the true mother of all Buddhas.** This Dharma is cultivated without cultivating. One cultivates, and yet one is not cultivating. Not cultivating, one still cultivates. It is rather like putting on a play, and yet at the same time it's real. That's the wonder of it. You can't imagine how subtle and wonderful this Dharma-door is. You cannot conceive of it nor express it in words. It is the mother of all Buddhas. Every Buddha is born from this samadhi. So pay attention. Do you want to become a Buddha? If so, you have to keep your mind on what I'm saying. And then you have to develop the skill through actual practice. Don't just spend your efforts on superficial skills. You have to attain some internal *gung fu*.

Sutra:

"You may hear the secret Dharma-doors
Of Buddhas as numerous as motes of dust,
But without first renouncing desire and outflows,
You may amass learning,
but you will still make mistakes.

Commentary:

Manjushri Bodhisattva continues, **"You may hear the secret Dharma-doors / Of Buddhas as numerous as motes of dust."** Ananda, you have listened to limitless Buddhas explain their secret dharmas." "Secret" means that you say something for one person and a second person doesn't realize it. Or you speak for the second person and the first one doesn't realize it. Or you speak for the second person and the first one doesn't know. Each is unaware of what is said to the other. Why does the Buddha have secret Dharmadoors? It is because the capacities of living beings are different. Each person is fond of different things. What is more, each person has cultivated a particular path in past lives. Therefore, the Buddha contemplates the opportunities. He looks to see what

Dharma-door you cultivated before, and based on that he teaches you how to cultivate now.

Contemplating the opportunities,
he bestows the teaching;
Speaking Dharma
for the sake of each person.

He does not teach you Dharma-doors which are not appropriate for you.

"But without first renouncing desire and outflows / You may amass learning, but you will still make mistakes." Although the Buddha has many secret dharmas, you still have to get rid of your desire and outflows." "Desire" is really hard to overcome. As soon as you have desire, you have out flows. The most serious desire, the one people find hardest to cut off, is the desire for forms. If you can cut it off, you are an outstanding person – extraordinary. When you study the Buddhadharma, you must cut off desire, in order to be able to be rid of outflows.

At the fourth fruition of Arhatship one has no outflows. A first-stage Arhat is at the position of seeing the Way, as a result of having extinguished eighty-eight kinds of delusion of views. The second and third fruition are called the position of cultivating the Way. A fourth-stage Arhat is at the position of having been certified to the Way. At the first, second, and third fruitions, one has not attained the state of having no outflows. Only at fourth stage is that achieved. Having no outflows is extremely important. Why hadn't Ananda reached that level? He had not gotten rid of desire. There were still some things he wanted. He was not yet pure, and so Dharma-Prince Manjushri tells him, "If you don't cultivate and get rid of greed and desire for forms, then you won't have a response with the Buddhadharma. If you merely concentrate on erudition, then you will still err. That's why you encountered the difficulty with Matangi's daughter. If you renounce desire and outflows, you won't have any more difficulties." When we see that such an

intelligent person as Ananda still had this fault, we should notice that not only have we not severed desire, we are in tent upon pursuing it. It has never occurred to us to get rid of it. Wouldn't you say that is an even greater mistake? At this point, everyone should return the light and examine within. Is it the case that we have desires? Have we gotten rid of them? If not, would we like to get rid of them? If not, then there's nothing else to say. But if you want to get rid of them, then quickly start cultivating the skill of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature. Study Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva's perfect penetration of the organ of the ear.

Sutra:

"You concentrate on learning
to uphold the Buddha's Dharma.
Why don't you listen to your own hearing?

Commentary:

"You concentrate on learning to uphold the Buddha's Dharma." You expend your energy on study of the Buddhadharma," Manjushri Bodhisattva says to Ananda. "With that skill, **why don't you listen to your own hearing?"** Why don't you return the hearing to hear the self-nature? Why don't you cultivate and develop that skill? Why don't you look into yourself?

O2 He explains how with this dharma one gradually transcends.

Sutra:

"Hearing does not spontaneously arise;
Because of sound it gets its name.
But when hearing returns and is free of sound,
What does one call that which is set free?

Commentary:

"Ananda, don't continue to take learning so seriously while neglecting your samadhi power. **Hearing does not spontaneously arise.** It doesn't happen all by itself. **Because of sound it gets its name."** Because there is sound, there is hearing. We call the

perception of a sound "hearing." **"But when hearing returns and is free of sound / What does one call that which is set free?"** We say that there is hearing because there is sound, but is the hearing still there when there is no sound? It is, because the nature of hearing is not subject to production or extinction. Therefore, turn the hearing around. From now on, don't follow out after the six sense-objects with your six sense-organs. Bring them back."

Returning the hearing,
listen to your nature,
Till the nature reaches
the supreme Way.

What is your self-nature? When you hear it, you will recognize it. Now, before you have heard it, you won't understand even if I tell you. For instance, when I drink this cup of tea, I myself know whether it is hot or cool, but you still don't have any idea. If you want to know, you will have to drink some yourself. If you want to recognize your self-nature, you first have to return the hearing. If you haven't done that, how can you expect to know your own nature?

"When you return the hearing, how do you listen?" you ask.

Use your ears. But don't listen to the sounds outside. Don't try to figure out what's happening out in the street, or who is saying what. Turn the hearing inward and listen inside yourself. In this way your own nature will be revealed. That's how you do it. Now do you understand?

When the hearing is turned around, one is set free from external sounds. "What does one call that which is set free?" If you can divorce yourself from sounds, and hear and yet not hear, is this really hearing, then? It is and it isn't. It isn't, yet it is. Hear and yet do not hear. That's what's meant by getting free of sounds. One does hear, but it's not the same as the way one heard before. Even though it is said that ordinary hearing can reach far and near, it still has a limit. If you genuinely attain the state of returning the hearing

to hear the self-nature, you can hear throughout the Dharma Realm. But you can also choose not to listen to any of the sounds throughout the Dharma Realm. You have control. It's like a telegram. If I want to send one, I can send one anywhere at any time. But if I don't want to send the telegram, I don't have to do If I want to hear some sound in the Dharma Realm, I can tune in on it. You try it. What is that which is free of sound called, then? It doesn't have a name. That which is beyond even the name hearing is true hearing.

Sutra:

> ***"As soon as one sense-organ returns to the source,***
> ***The entire six are liberated.***

Commentary:

When even the name is gone, one can say that that sense-organ is untied. **"As soon as one sense-organ returns to the source / The entire six are liberated."** The "source" is the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. When one sense-organ reverts to the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, all six come back together. The older brother returns and the younger brothers follow along. But If you don't bring one sense-organ back, none of them will return. They are connected, because they were originally one, but then they divided into six.

Sutra:

> ***"Sight and hearing are like an illusory covering.***
> ***The Triple Realm, a vision of flowers in space.***
> ***When hearing reverts, the cataract is gone.***
> ***The 'dust' gives way to pure and perfect insight.***

Commentary:

Why don't we become Buddhas? We are tied up by the six sense-organs and six sense-objects. So we must find a method to attain liberation. We are not the only ones bound by the organs and objects; at that time, Ananda also had this problem. We are in the same predicament. Ananda took this path to attain liberation, and

we are now very lucky to learn about this method. We, too, can travel this path and get free.

“Sight and hearing are like an illusory covering.” Seeing and hearing are not something real. They are like an illusion, like a film over the eyes, like clouds in the sky. **“The Triple Realm, a vision of flowers in space.”** The desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm make up the Triple Realm. We are within it, gazing into emptiness until our staring makes us tired. Then it looks as if there are flowers dancing in space. At the beginning of his verse, Manjushri said,

The emptiness created within enlightenment,
Is like a single bubble in all the sea.

Emptiness arises out of the vastness of enlightenment and is as insignificant as one bubble in the great ocean. And the Triple Realm is like a bubble in the sea of emptiness. **“When hearing reverts, the cataract is gone.”** When one returns the hearing and hears the self-nature, the film disappears. **“The ‘dust’ gives way to pure and perfect insight.”** When the experiencing of the six sense-objects dissolves, there are no external defiling objects to disturb your self-nature. Then your enlightened nature is pure and perfect.

Sutra:

“When purity is ultimate, the light is penetrating.
A stillness shines and includes within it
all of emptiness.
Looking at the world from this point of view,
Everything that happens is just like a dream.
Matangi’s daughter, too, is part of the dream.
Who was able, then, to physically detain you?

Commentary:

Ah, Manjushri Bodhisattva talks tough. He’s not the least bit polite. He’s downright rude to Ananda here. “**When purity is ultimate, the light is penetrating.** Once your insight is pure and

perfect, then, at the ultimate point, a light pervades. You become enlightened. **A stillness shines and includes within it all of emptiness.** When you attain this skill, emptiness is found within you. Your own mature is the great enlightened nature. When you return to that nature which was always yours, you include all of space. **Looking at the world from this point of view / Everything that happens is just like a dream.** As you continue to use this skill, you contemplate the world and find that it is all nothing but a dream. **Matangi's daughter, too, is part of the dream / Who was able, then, to physically detain you?** She is part of the Illusion. Who was able to capture you? You lost face. You wanted to be there. You liked it. If you could reach the level just described, who could restrain you?" Not very polite, wouldn't you say?

O3 He brings up an analogy to relate to the dharma just explained.

Sutra:

"It is like a puppeteer who plays with shadows
And works the dolls to seem as real as people.
Although one sees them move about freely,
They are really governed by a set of strings.
Cease operating the controls
and they return to stillness.
The entire illusion is without a nature.

Commentary:

"It is like a puppeteer who plays with shadows." This refers to the puppet shows of old when the puppets danced and acted behind a screen of framed oil-paper. Behind it puppets made of donkey skin attached to strings are manipulated by the puppeteer, and the audience sees their shadows against the screen. Nowadays we have movies. The puppets look life-like, but actually they are controlled by the puppet-master. They used to fight noisy battles on stage with swords and guns. I remember watching them as a child. He **"works the dolls to seem as real as people."** Dressed as men and women, they cavort on stage. **"Although one sees them move**

about freely / They are really governed by a set of strings.” It seems like they can move their arms and legs and even their eyes and lips, but it's all mechanical. They are strung up to an apparatus. Nonetheless, people watch transfixed. **“Cease operating the controls and they return to stillness / The entire illusion is without a nature.”** There was nothing to it after all. In this section, Manjushri Bodhisattva explains how everything is like an illusion. The previous section made clear how we are in a dream.

Sutra:

> ***“The six sense-organs are also thus.***
> ***At first there was one essential brightness.***
> ***Which split into a six-fold combination.***
> ***If but one part ceases and returns,***
> ***All six functions will stop as well.***
> ***In response to a thought, defiling objects vanish,***
> ***Becoming pure and wonderful perfect brightness.***

Commentary:

Why does he speak about dreams and illusions? It is because the six sense-organs are like an imaginary play. **“The six sense-organs are also thus.”** The six organs are like the play put on by the puppeteer. It's as if a mechanism is controlling them. But if one organ can become pure, the others will be freed as well.

“At first there was one essential brightness.” Originally there was the single brightness of the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. “It **split into a six-fold combination.”** It divided into eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. **“If but one part ceases and returns” –** if the knot is untied – **“All six functions will stop as well.”** If one function stops, the others will also cease; they will no longer function. **“In response to a thought, defiling objects vanish.”** All the involvement between the six sense-organs and six sense-objects comes to an end, **“Becoming pure and wonderful perfect brightness.”** They become the everlasting pure nature and bright substance of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

O4 He concludes by telling that the cause and effect are ultimate.

Sutra:

> ***"If there is residual defilement, one must still study.***
> ***When the brightness is ultimate,***
> ***that is the Tathagata.***

Commentary:

"**If there is residual defilement, one must still study.** When ignorance is cut off initially, there remains a subtle ignorance called "appearance of production ignorance." That is what is meant here by "residual defilement." Bodhisattvas must still cut that off. **"When the brightness is ultimate, that is the Tathagata."** That is the basic substance of the Thus Come One.

M4 He urges everyone to diligently cultivate and certify.

Sutra:

> ***"Ananda, and everyone in the great assembly,***
> ***Turn yourselves around and revert the hearing.***
> ***Return the hearing and listen to the self nature***
> ***Till the nature reaches the supreme way.***
> ***That is what perfect penetration really means.***

Commentary:

"Ananda, and everyone in the great assembly / Turn yourselves around and revert the hearing." You should cultivate according to this method. Don't let yourselves run outside. Come back. Look within and find yourself. **"Return the hearing and listen to the self nature / Till the nature reaches the supreme way.** Your nature can accomplish the unsurpassed path. **That is what perfect penetration really means."** Why does he select the organ of the ear? It is the easiest to cultivate successfully. I believe that some of you already know how to develop this skill, while others do not. What does it mean to return the hearing to hear the self-nature? It is the skill used in investigating Ch'an. When you

investigate Ch'an, you don't want to expend all your energy on seeking outside. You want to turn the light around and shine it within. Then you ask yourself, "Who is mindful of the Buddha?" "Who?" You want to put the "Who?" in your heart and then listen with your ears. Pursue "Who?" Do this nonstop. Don't let your skill become dispersed. You investigate this topic in everything you do.

Walking, standing, sitting, reclining,
don't be apart from this.
If you depart from this,
you've made a mistake.

What is "this?" It is the question, "Who is mindful of the Buddha?" You don't have to ask out loud; ask in your heart and listen with your ears. Listen within, not outside. After you have listened within, your heart and your hearing-nature will eventually merge into one. And then in some unexpected way, at some unexpected moment, you will suddenly open enlightenment. But you definitely must bring your mind and nature together. Don't let them scatter in all directions. Don't let them get dissipated outside. Collect them within. Return the hearing and listen to your own nature. Eventually and naturally your skill will develop. Investigating a Ch'an topic and returning the hearing to listen to the self-nature are the same. And now everyone knows that using the organ of the ear in cultivation is the easiest method. So put your energy there and cultivate this Dharma-door.

Sutra:

"It is the gateway entered
by Buddhas as many as dust motes.
It is the one path to Nirvana.
Thus Come Ones of the past
perfected this method.
Bodhisattvas now merge
with this total brightness.
People of the future

who study and practice
Will also rely on this Dharma.
Through this method I, too,
have been certified.
Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva
was not alone in using it.

Commentary:

Now Manjushri Bodhisattva certifies as authentic this Dharma he has selected. **“It is the gateway entered by Buddhas as many as dust motes / It is the one path to Nirvana.”** He says, “Not only was Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva certified through his use of this Dharma-door, this method of perfect penetration that I am explaining, I, too, Manjushri, gave proof to this doctrine of perfect penetration of the organ of the ear. Not only myself, but in the past countless Buddhas also found this the one path to Nirvana. It was by this Way that they reached the fruition of Nirvana. “**Thus Come Ones of the past perfected this method.** They became accomplished by means of the perfect penetration derived from returning the hearing to hear the self-nature. **Bodhisattvas now merge with this total brightness.** Bodhisattvas cultivating right now are on the same road. **People of the future who study and practice / Will also rely on this Dharma.** People of the future who as yet haven’t even encountered the Buddhadharma will come to select this method for cultivation. **Through this method I, too, have been certified.** A long time ago I gave proof to this Dharma-door of perfect penetration. **Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva was not alone in using it.**”

M5 He concludes his answer.

Sutra:

“As the Buddha, the World Honored One, requested,
I choose sincerely a skill-in-means,
One to save those in the final aeon
Who seek to escape the mundane world,

And perfect the heart of Nirvana:
The best way is to contemplate
the sounds of the world.

Commentary:

"As the Buddha, the World Honored One, requested / I choose sincerely a skill-in-means." Buddha, I speak the truth, I say what is really so. The method which is the **one to save those in the final aeon / Who seek to escape the mundane world / And perfect the heart of Nirvana."** Of the eighteen realms and the seven elements, which Dharma-door is the most perfectly penetrating? Which one is most appropriate for living beings in the Dharma-ending Age? Some will want to get out of the world and seek transcendence. How can they fulfill their vow to cultivate the Way and reach Nirvana? **The best way is to contemplate the sounds of the world.** Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva, here in the Saha world, got the best response from this method. This method is the most appropriate one. It tallies best with the causes and conditions of most people.

Sutra:

"All the other kinds of expedients
Require the awesome spirit of the Buddha.
In some cases they bring immediate transcendence,
But they are not the customary means of practice,
Spoken for those of shallow and deep roots alike.

Commentary:

"All the other kinds of expedients / Require the awesome spirit of the Buddha." In cultivating any of the other expedient Dharma-doors besides that of the ear, one needs the Buddha's aid in order to succeed. Without the Buddha's support, one cannot accomplish anything through them. **In some cases they bring immediate transcendence / But they are not the customary means of practice / Spoken for those of shallow and deep roots alike.** Although some used these methods to get out of the

wearisome mundane dust and false thinking, they are not Dharma-doors which just anyone can use. In speaking Dharma, one must look at the causes and conditions. I must observe the person. For someone with wisdom, one should speak more profound Dharma. For stupid people, one should explain simple dharmas. The Dharma cannot always be expressed in the same way. Only the organ of the ear is a perfect method which anyone can study. I think this Dharma-door is the most perfectly penetrating."

M6 He seeks aid and generally concludes.

Sutra:

"I bow to the Ones Come Thus and the Tripitaka,
And to those inconceivable ones with no outflows,
Trusting they will aid those in the future,
So that no one will doubt this dharma-door.
It is an expedient easy to master;
An appropriate teaching for Ananda
And for those immersed in the final age.
They should cultivate this organ of hearing,
A perfect penetration that surpasses all others.
It is the way to the true mind."

Commentary:

After Manjushri Bodhisattva finished speaking this verse, he made obeisance to the Triple Jewel. **"I bow to the Ones Come Thus and the Tripitaka."** The "Ones Come Thus" are the Buddhas. The "Tripitaka" is the Dharma. **"And to those inconceivable ones with no outflows"**: "Those" refers to the Sangha. The Bodhisattvas and Arhats with no outflows have attained a state which is inconceivable and ineffable. Their spiritual penetrations and wonderful functions are difficult to comprehend. He bows to the sages and saints of the Sangha, **"Trusting they will aid those in the future / So that no one will doubt this dharma-door."** I hope you will help all living beings of the future, so that they won't

have any doubts about the Dharma-door of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature.

"**It is an expedient easy to master / An appropriate teaching for Ananda.** This Dharma-door is both easy to cultivate and easy to be successful with. It is the best method for Ananda to use. There is none better. **And for those immersed in the final age / They should cultivate this organ of hearing.** Not only will this Dharma-door bring a response to Ananda, It is also right for beings who will fall into the Dharma-ending Age. Just use the method of cultivating with the organ of the ear. **A perfect penetration that surpasses all others / It is the way to the true mind.** This Dharma-door of perfect penetration goes beyond the other twenty-four expedient methods. It is a lot easier and brings surpassing results. The true and actual mind found through this Dharma-door is as I have explained above.

H3 Based on the instruction, the great assembly becomes enlightened and accomplishes entry.

I1 Ananda and those like him become enlightened.

Sutra:

Thereupon, Ananda and all in the great assembly experienced a clarity of body and mind. Having attained such profound instruction, they contemplated the Buddha's Bodhi and Parinirvana like someone who, having traveled far on business, knows that he is on the road home, though he has not returned completely.

Commentary:

Thereupon, Ananda and all in the great assembly experienced a clarity of body and mind. They had gained tremendous understanding. **Having attained such profound instruction, they contemplated the Buddha's Bodhi and Parinirvana.** They had received magnificent teaching from both the Buddha and Manjushri Bodhisattva. They looked upon the doctrines of Bodhi and Nirvana **like someone who, having traveled far on business, knows that he is on the road home,**

though he has not returned completely. This person has had to go away on business and hasn't arrived back home yet. But he's gone far enough to recognize that he's on the way to his house. The meaning is that although the members of the Great Assembly and Ananda had not actually been certified as having attained the second, third, or fourth fruitions of Arhatship, now at least they understood the theory, the doctrine.

I2 Matangi's daughter and those like her accomplish entry.

Sutra:

Throughout the entire assembly, the gods, dragons, and all the eightfold division, those of the two vehicles who were not yet beyond study, as well as all the Bodhisattvas of initial resolve, as numerous as the sands in ten Ganges Rivers, found their fundamental mind and, far removed from dust and defilement, attained the purity of the Dharma Eye.

Commentary:

Throughout the entire assembly, the gods, dragons, and all the eightfold division of ghosts and spirits: the eightfold division includes gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras, mahoragas, humans, and non-humans, as well as the dragons. **Those of the two vehicles who were not yet beyond study** refers to the Sound-Hearers and those Enlightened to Conditions. Together with **all the Bodhisattvas of initial resolve, as numerous as the sands in ten Ganges Rivers,** they **found their fundamental mind.** It was not like before, when they didn't even recognize their own mind. They were **far removed from dust and defilement,** and so they **attained the purity of the Dharma Eye.**

Sutra:

The Bhikshuni named "Nature" attained Arhatship after hearing this verse.

Commentary:

The Bhikshuni named "Nature" was Matangi's daughter. She **attained Arhatship after hearing this verse** spoken by Manjushri Bodhisattva. At this point she surpassed Ananda by being certified to the second stage of Arhatship. Ananda was still a first-stage sage.

Sutra:

And limitless beings brought forth a matchless, unequalled resolve for Annuttarasamyaksambodhi.

Commentary:

At that time, there were also **limitless**, boundless, uncountable beings in the Dharma Assembly who **brought forth a matchless, unequalled resolve for Annuttarasamyaksambodhi**. There was nothing that could compare with the extent of their resolve. It was totally genuine. **"Anuttarasamyaksambodhi"** means the "Unsurpassed Proper and Equal Right Enlightenment." **Anuttara** is unsurpassed; **samyak** is proper and equal; and **sambodhi** is right enlightenment. Their intention was to become Buddhas.

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When Buddhism first came to China from India, one of the most important tasks required for its establishment was the translation of the Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Chinese. This work involved a great many people, such as the renowned monk National Master Kumarajiva (fifth century), who led an assembly of over 800 people to work on the translation of the Tripitaka (Buddhist canon) for over a decade. Because of the work of individuals such as these, nearly the entire Buddhist Tripitaka of over a thousand texts exists to the present day in Chinese.

Now the banner of the Buddha's Teachings is being firmly planted in Western soil, and the same translation work is being done from Chinese into English. Since 1970, the Buddhist Text Translation Society (BTTS) has been making a paramount contribution toward this goal. Aware that the Buddhist Tripitaka is a work of such magnitude that its translation could never be entrusted to a single person, the BTTS, emulating the translation assemblies of ancient times, does not publish a work until it has passed through four committees for primary translation, revision, editing, and certification. The leaders of these committees are Bhikshus (monks) and Bhikshunis (nuns) who have devoted their lives to the study and practice of the Buddha's teachings. For this reason, all of the works of the BTTS put an emphasis on what the principles of the Buddha's teachings mean in terms of actual practice and not simply hypothetical conjecture.

The translations of canonical works by the Buddhist Text Translation Society are accompanied by extensive commentaries by the Venerable Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua.

BTTS Publications

Buddhist Sutras. Amitabha Sutra, Dharma Flower (Lotus) Sutra, Flower Adornment (Avatamsaka) Sutra, Heart Sutra & Verses without a Stand, Shurangama Sutra, Sixth Patriarch Sutra, Sutra in Forty-two Sections, Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva, Vajra Prajna Paramita (Diamond) Sutra.

Commentarial Literature. Buddha Root Farm, City of 10000 Buddhas Recitation Handbook, Filiality: The Human Source, Herein Lies the Treasure-trove, Listen to Yourself Think Everything Over, Shastra on the Door to Understanding the Hundred Dharmas, Song of Enlightenment, The Ten Dharma Realms Are Not beyond a Single Thought, Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma, Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma during the 1993 Trip to Taiwan, Water Mirror Reflecting Heaven.

Biographical. In Memory of the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua, Pictorial Biography of the Venerable Master Hsü Yün, Records of High Sanghans, Records of the Life of the Venerable Master Hsüan Hua, Three Steps One Bow, World Peace Gathering, News from True Cultivators, Open Your Eyes Take a Look at the World, With One Heart Bowing to the City of 10000 Buddhas.

Children's Books. Cherishing Life, Human Roots: Buddhist Stories for Young Readers.

Musics, Novels and Brochures. Songs for Awakening, Awakening, The Three Cart Patriarch, City of 10000 Buddhas Color Brochure, Celebrisi's Journey, Heng Ch'au's Journal.

The Buddhist Monthly–Vajra Bodhi Sea is a monthly journal of orthodox Buddhism which has been published by the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, formerly known as the Sino-American Buddhist Association, since 1970. Each issue contains the most recent translations of the Buddhist canon by the Buddhist Text Translation Society. Also included in each issue are a biography of a great Patriarch of Buddhism from the ancient past, sketches of the lives of contemporary monastics and lay-followers around the world, articles on practice, and other material. The journal is bilingual, Chinese and English

Please visit our web-site at **`www.bttsonline.org`** for the latest publications and for ordering information.

The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association

Mission

The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association (formerly the Sino-American Buddhist Association) was founded by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua in the United States of America in 1959. Taking the Dharma Realm as its scope, the Association aims to disseminate the genuine teachings of the Buddha throughout the world. The Association is dedicated to translating the Buddhist canon, propagating the Orthodox Dharma, promoting ethical education, and bringing benefit and happiness to all beings. Its hope is that individuals, families, the society, the nation, and the entire world will, under the transforming influence of the Buddhadharma, gradually reach the state of ultimate truth and goodness.

The Founder

The Venerable Master, whose names were An Tse and To Lun, received the Dharma name Hsuan Hua and the transmission of Dharma from Venerable Master Hsu Yun in the lineage of the Wei Yang Sect. He was born in Manchuria, China, at the beginning of the century. At nineteen, he entered the monastic order and dwelt in a hut by his mother's grave to practice filial piety. He meditated, studied the teachings, ate only one meal a day, and slept sitting up. In 1948 he went to Hong Kong, where he established the Buddhist Lecture Hall and other Way-places. In 1962 he brought the Proper Dharma to the West, lecturing on several dozen Mahayana Sutras in the United States. Over the years, the Master established more than twenty monasteries of Proper Dharma under the auspices of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association and the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. He also founded centers for the translation of the Buddhist canon and for education to spread the influence of the Dharma in the East and West. The Master manifested the stillness in the United States in 1995. Through his lifelong, selfless dedication to teaching living beings with wisdom and compassion, he influenced countless people to change their faults and to walk upon the pure, bright path to enlightenment.

Dharma Propagation, Buddhist Text Translation, and Education

The Venerable Master Hua's three great vows after leaving the home-life were (1) to propagate the Dharma, (2) to translate the Buddhist Canon, and (3) to promote education. In order to make these vows a reality, the Venerable Master based himself on the Three Principles and the Six Guidelines. Courageously facing every hardship, he founded monasteries, schools, and centers in the West, drawing in living beings and teaching them on a vast scale. Over the years, he founded the following institutions:

The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas and Its Branches

In propagating the Proper Dharma, the Venerable Master not only trained people but also founded Way-places where the Dharma wheel could turn and living beings could be saved. He wanted to provide cultivators with pure places to practice in accord with the Buddha's regulations. Over the years, he founded many Way-places of Proper Dharma. In the United States and Canada, these include the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas; Gold Mountain Monastery; Gold Sage Monastery; Gold Wheel Monastery; Gold Summit Monastery; Gold Buddha Monastery; Avatamsaka Monastery; Long Beach Monastery; the City of the Dharma Realm; Berkeley Buddhist Monastery; Avatamsaka Hermitage; and Blessings, Prosperity, and Longevity Monastery. In Taiwan, there are the Dharma Realm Buddhist Books Distribution Association, Dharma Realm Monastery, and Amitabha Monastery. In Malaysia, there are Zi Yun Dong Monastery, Deng Bi An Monastery, and Lotus Vihara. In Hong Kong, there are the Buddhist Lecture Hall and Cixing Monastery.

Purchased in 1974, the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is the hub of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association. The City is located in Talmage, Mendocino County, California, 110 miles north of San Francisco. Eighty of the 488 acres of land are in active use. The remaining acreage consists of meadows, orchards, and woods. With over seventy large buildings containing over 2,000 rooms, blessed with serenity and fresh, clean air, it is the first large Buddhist monastic community in the United States. It is also an international center for the Proper Dharma.

Although the Venerable Master Hua was the Ninth Patriarch in the Weiyang Sect of the Chan School, the monasteries he founded emphasize all of the five main practices of Mahayana Buddhism (Chan meditation, Pure Land,

esoteric, Vinaya (moral discipline), and doctrinal studies). This accords with the Buddha's words: "The Dharma is level and equal, with no high or low." At the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, the rules of purity are rigorously observed. Residents of the City strive to regulate their own conduct and to cultivate with vigor. Taking refuge in the Proper Dharma, they lead pure and selfless lives, and attain peace in body and mind. The Sutras are expounded and the Dharma wheel is turned daily. Residents dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to making Buddhism flourish. Monks and nuns in all the monasteries take one meal a day, always wear their precept sash, and follow the Three Principles:

Freezing, we do not scheme.
Starving, we do not beg.
Dying of poverty, we ask for nothing.
According with conditions, we do not change.
Not changing, we accord with conditions.
We adhere firmly to our three great principles.
We renounce our lives to do the Buddha's work.
We take the responsibility to mold our own destinies.
We rectify our lives to fulfill the Sanghan's role.
Encountering specific matters,
we understand the principles.
Understanding the principles,
we apply them in specific matters.
We carry on the single pulse of
the Patriarchs' mind-transmission.

The monasteries also follow the Six Guidelines: not contending, not being greedy, not seeking, not being selfish, not pursuing personal advantage, and not lying.

International Translation Institute

The Venerable Master vowed to translate the Buddhist Canon (Tripitaka) into Western languages so that it would be widely accessible throughout the world. In 1973, he founded the International Translation Institute on Washington Street in San Francisco for the purpose of translating Buddhist scriptures into English and other languages. In 1977, the Institute was merged into Dharma Realm Buddhist University as the Institute for the Translation of Buddhist Texts. In 1991, the Venerable Master purchased a large building in

Burlingame (south of San Francisco) and established the International Translation Institute there for the purpose of translating and publishing Buddhist texts. To date, in addition to publishing over one hundred volumes of Buddhist texts in Chinese, the Association has published more than one hundred volumes of English, French, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Japanese translations of Buddhist texts, as well as bilingual (Chinese and English) editions. Audio and video tapes also continue to be produced. The monthly journal Vajra Bodhi Sea, which has been in circulation for nearly thirty years, has been published in bilingual (Chinese and English) format in recent years.

In the past, the difficult and vast mission of translating the Buddhist canon in China was sponsored and supported by the emperors and kings themselves. In our time, the Venerable Master encouraged his disciples to cooperatively shoulder this heavy responsibility, producing books and audio tapes and using the medium of language to turn the wheel of Proper Dharma and do the great work of the Buddha. All those who aspire to devote themselves to this work of sages should uphold the Eight Guidelines of the International Translation Institute:

1. One must free oneself from the motives of personal fame and profit.
2. One must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.
3. One must refrain from aggrandizing one’s work and denigrating that of others.
4. One must not establish oneself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with one’s fault-finding.
5. One must take the Buddha-mind as one’s own mind.
6. One must use the wisdom of Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles.
7. One must request Virtuous Elders of the ten directions to certify one’s translations.
8. One must endeavor to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

These are the Venerable Master’s vows, and participants in the work of translation should strive to realize them.

Instilling Goodness Elementary School, Developing Virtue Secondary School, Dharma Realm Buddhist University

"Education is the best national defense." The Venerable Master Hua saw clearly that in order to save the world, it is essential to promote good education. If we want to save the world, we have to bring about a complete change in people's minds and guide them to cast out unwholesomeness and to pursue goodness. To this end the Master founded Instilling Goodness Elementary School in 1974, and Developing Virtue Secondary School and Dharma Realm Buddhist University in 1976.

In an education embodying the spirit of Buddhism, the elementary school teaches students to be filial to parents, the secondary school teaches students to be good citizens, and the university teaches such virtues as humaneness and righteousness. Instilling Goodness Elementary School and Developing Virtue Secondary School combine the best of contemporary and traditional methods and of Western and Eastern cultures. They emphasize moral virtue and spiritual development, and aim to guide students to become good and capable citizens who will benefit humankind. The schools offer a bilingual (Chinese/English) program where boys and girls study separately. In addition to standard academic courses, the curriculum includes ethics, meditation, Buddhist studies, and so on, giving students a foundation in virtue and guiding them to understand themselves and explore the truths of the universe. Branches of the schools (Sunday schools) have been established at branch monasteries with the aim of propagating filial piety and ethical education.

Dharma Realm Buddhist University, whose curriculum focuses on the Proper Dharma, does not merely transmit academic knowledge. It emphasizes a foundation in virtue, which expands into the study of how to help all living beings discover their inherent nature. Thus, Dharma Realm Buddhist University advocates a spirit of shared inquiry and free exchange of ideas, encouraging students to study various canonical texts and use different experiences and learning styles to tap their inherent wisdom and fathom the meanings of those texts. Students are encouraged to practice the principles they have understood and apply the Buddhadharma in their lives, thereby nurturing their wisdom and virtue. The University aims to produce outstanding individuals of high moral character who will be able to bring benefit to all sentient beings.

Sangha and Laity Training Programs

In the Dharma-ending Age, in both Eastern and Western societies there are very few monasteries that actually practice the Buddha's regulations and strictly uphold the precepts. Teachers with genuine wisdom and understanding, capable of guiding those who aspire to pursue careers in Buddhism, are very rare. The Venerable Master founded the Sangha and Laity Training Programs in 1982 with the goals of raising the caliber of the Sangha, perpetuating the Proper Dharma, providing professional training for Buddhists around the world on both practical and theoretical levels, and transmitting the wisdom of the Buddha.

The Sangha Training Program gives monastics a solid foundation in Buddhist studies and practice, training them in the practical affairs of Buddhism and Sangha management. After graduation, students will be able to assume various responsibilities related to Buddhism in monasteries, institutions, and other settings. The program emphasizes a thorough knowledge of Buddhism, under-standing of the scriptures, earnest cultivation, strict observance of precepts, and the development of a virtuous character, so that students will be able to propagate the Proper Dharma and perpetuate the Buddha's wisdom. The Laity Training Program offers courses to help laypeople develop correct views, study and practice the teachings, and understand monastic regulations and ceremonies, so that they will be able to contribute their abilities in Buddhist organizations.

Let Us Go Forward Together

In this Dharma-ending Age when the world is becoming increasingly dangerous and evil, the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, in consonance with its guiding principles, opens the doors of its monasteries and centers to those of all religions and nationalities. Anyone who is devoted to humaneness, righteousness, virtue, and the pursuit of truth, and who wishes to understand him or herself and help humankind, is welcome to come study and practice with us. May we together bring benefit and happiness to all living beings.

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Verse of Transference

May the merit and virtue accrued from this work,
Adorn the Buddha's Pure Lands,
Repaying four kinds of kindness above,
And aiding those suffering in the paths below.

May those who see and hear of this,
All bring forth the resolve for Bodhi,
And when this retribution body is over,
Be born together in ultimate bliss.

Dharma Protector Wei T’o Bodhisattva

The Shurangama Sutra

The Shurangama Sutra

Volume Six

a simple explanation by the

Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

English translation by the
Buddhist Text Translation Society

Buddhist Text Translation Society
Dharma Realm Buddhist University
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Introduction

This is the sixth of eight volumes of the *Shurangama Sutra*, with commentaries from the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua.

Ananda, having gained what he had never before, wishes to propagate the teachings and save living beings. However, he is concerned that demonic teachers of the present and future will also propound their deviant theories, thus misleading and exploiting living beings. Ananda asks how does one protect oneself from such teachings.

In "The Three Non-Outflow Studies", the Buddha explains how disciplining the mind via precepts, which in turn produces samadhi, which in turn produces wisdom are the three unalterable aspects of cultivation. Of the precepts, he stresses that one must specifically cut off lust, killing, stealing and false speech. Anything not in accord with this is the teaching of the demons.

Ananda then asks how livings beings in the Dharma-Ending Age can establish a Way place (*bodhimanda*) so that living beings can safely cultivate in accord with the Buddha's rules of purity. In "Establishing the Bodhimanda" the Buddha explains just how to do that.

Ananda then, remembering how Manjushri saved him from the then-prostitute daughter of Matangi by using a spiritual mantra, requests that the Buddha declares it for the benefit and protection of

future living beings. In “The Spiritual Mantra”, the mantra is preciously proclaimed. After it’s proclamation, Bodhisattvas, gods, kings, and other great spiritual beings resolved to protect all those of the present and future who uphold the spiritual mantra.

Now that Ananda has secured the means to protect people’s cultivation from the multitudes of demons (through the use of the bodhimanda and the spiritual mantra), he then proceeds to ask the Buddha how one can ascertain one’s own progress from an ordinary person to final Nirvana.

In response, the Buddha does not immediately speak of the stages of cultivation.[i] Instead, in “The Two Upside-down Causes”, the Buddha first explains how one can determine if one is travelling on the right path, since knowing what stage one is in is useless if one is traversing on the wrong path.

The two causes are: the upside-down state of living beings and the upside-down state of the world. In “The Twelve Categories of Living Beings”, the Buddha explains how these two upside-down states produce the twelve categories of living beings that abound throughout the world.

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i. The stages of cultivation are covered in volume seven.

User's Guide

to the Shurangama Sutra series

Because of the length of the *Shurangama Sutra*, and the need to provide aid to various readers, the Sutra has been compiled into a series of 9 books: the "Sutra Text and Suppliments", and the remaining Volumes one to eight.

The "Sutra Text and Suppliments" contains:

1. the entire Sutra text, which is in excess of 2700 paragraphs;
2. the entire outline, which contains 1676 entries;
3. and a master index, which has index references for both the "Sutra Text and Suppliments" and the eight volumes.

Volumes one to eight contain:

1. the Sutra text, with commentaries;
2. the local outline entries;
3. and a local index.

Readers who wish to read or recite the Sutra in its entirety will find the "Sutra Text and Suppliments" very useful.

Those who wish to deeply study the Sutra with its commentaries will find volumes one to eight indispensable.

Exhortation to Protect and Propagate

by Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua

Within Buddhism, there are very many important sutras. However, the most important Sutra is the *Shurangama Sutra*. If there are places which have the *Shurangama Sutra*, then the Proper Dharma dwells in the world. If there is no *Shurangama Sutra*, then the Dharma Ending Age appears. Therefore, we Buddhist disciples, each and every one, must bring our strength, must bring our blood, and must bring our sweat to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*. In the *Sutra of the Ultimate Extinction of the Dharma*, it says very, very clearly that in the Dharma Ending Age, the *Shurangama Sutra* is the first to disappear, and the rest of the sutras disappear after it. If the *Shurangama Sutra* does not disappear, then the Proper Dharma Age is present. Because of that, we Buddhist disciples must use our lives to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*, must use vows and resolution to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*, and cause the *Shurangama Sutra* to be known far and wide, reaching every nook and cranny, reaching into each and every dust-mote, reaching out to the exhaustion of empty space and of the Dharma Realm. If we can do that, then there will be a time of Proper Dharma radiating great light.

Why would the *Shurangama Sutra* be destroyed? It is because it is too true. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's true body. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's sharira. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's true and actual stupa and shrine. Therefore, because

the *Shurangama Sutra* is so true, all the demon kings use all kinds of methods to destroy the *Shurangama Sutra*. They begin by starting rumors, saying that the *Shurangama Sutra* is phony. Why do they say the *Shurangama Sutra* is phony? It is because the *Shurangama Sutra* speaks too truly, especially in the sections on The Four Decisive Deeds, the Twenty-five Sages Describing Perfect Penetration, and the States of the Fifty Skandha Demons. Those of off-center persuasions and externally-oriented ways, weird demons and strange freaks, are unable to stand it. Consequently there are a good many senseless people who claim that the *Shurangama Sutra* is a forgery.

Now, the principles set forth in the *Shurangama Sutra* are on the one hand proper, and on the other in accord with principle, and the weird demons and strange freaks, those in various cults and sects, all cannot hide away their forms. Most senseless people, in particular unwise scholars and garbage-collecting professors "Tread upon the holy writ." With their extremely scant and partial understanding, they are confused and unclear, lacking real erudition and true and actual wisdom. That is why they falsely criticize. We who study the Buddhadharma should very deeply be aware of these circumstances. Therefore, wherever we go, we should bring up the *Shurangama Sutra*. Wherever we go, we should propagate the *Shurangama Sutra*. Wherever we go, we should introduce the *Shurangama Sutra* to people. Why is that? It is because we wish to cause the Proper Dharma long to dwell in the world.

If the *Shurangama Sutra* is regarded as true, then there is no problem. To verify its truth, let me say that if the *Shurangama Sutra* were phony, then I would willingly fall into the hells forever through all eternity—for being unable to recognize the Buddhadharma—for mistaking the false for true. If the *Shurangama Sutra* is true, then life after life in every time I make the vow to propagate the Great Dharma of the Shurangama, that I shall in every time and every place propagate the true principles of the Shurangama.

Everyone should pay attention to the following point. How could the *Shurangama Sutra* not have been spoken by the Buddha? No one else could have spoken the *Shurangama Sutra*. And so I hope that all those people who make senseless accusations will wake up fast and stop creating the causes for suffering in the Hell of Pulling Out Tongues. No matter who the scholar is, no matter what country students of the Buddhadharma are from, all should quickly mend their ways, admit their mistakes, and manage to change. There is no greater good than that. I can then say that all who look at the *Shurangama Sutra*, all who listen to the *Shurangama Sutra*, and all who investigate the *Shurangama Sutra*, will very quickly accomplish Buddhahood.

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The Eight Guidelines

of the Buddhist Text Translation Society

1. A volunteer must free him/herself from the motives of personal fame and profit.
2. A volunteer must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.
3. A volunteer must refrain from aggrandizing his/her work and denigrating that of others.
4. A volunteer must not establish him/herself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with his or her fault-finding.
5. A volunteer must take the Buddha-mind as his/her own mind.
6. A volunteer must use the wisdom of Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles.
7. A volunteer must request Virtuous Elders in the ten directions to certify his/her translations.
8. A volunteer must endeavour to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

Outline

of the Shurangama Sutra

The outline for the Shurangama Sutra was compiled by Dharma Master Yuan Ying, which categorizes the various parts of the Sutra text consisting of over 2,700 paragraphs to 1,676 entries.

These entries are presented in the form of a tree-like structure, dividing the various parts of the Sutra text into groups, those groupings being sub-divided further and further, thus providing a detailed break-down of the entire text.

Though the outline is not a prerequisite to reading the Sutra text and the accompanying commentaries, it serves as a useful tool for students of the Way who wish to deeply study the Sutra. Without this outline, students may find it difficult to refer to specific parts of the text.

Because of the size of the outline (and the Sutra), only outline entries which pertain to the Sutra text contained within this book is included.

For the outline of the entire Sutra, please refer to the “Sutra Text and Suppliments”, where the entire sutra text, outline, and index entries are all combined into one single volume.

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釋迦牟尼文佛

Namo Original Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha

Verse for Opening a Sutra

The unsurpassed, profound, and wonderful Dharma,
Is difficult to encounter in hundreds of millions of eons,
I now see and hear it, receive and uphold it,
And I vow to fathom the Tathagata's true meaning.

CHAPTER 1

The Three Non-Outflow Studies

G2 Aiding practices of the bodhimanda.
H1 At first request he speaks in general.

Sutra:

Ananda straightened his robes and then bowed in the midst of the assembly and placed his palms together. The tracks of his mind were perfectly clear, and he felt a mixture of joy and sorrow. His intent was to benefit beings in the future as he made obeisance and said to the Buddha, "Greatly Compassionate World Honored One, I have already awakened and attained this Dharma-door for becoming a Buddha, and I can cultivate it without the slightest doubt. I have often heard the Thus Come One say, 'Save others first then save yourself. That is the aspiration of a Bodhisattva. Once your own enlightenment is perfected, then you can enlighten others. That is the way the Thus Come One responds to the world.' Although I am not yet saved, I vow to save all living beings in the Dharma-ending Age.

Commentary:

After Ananda had listened to Manjushri Bodhisattva's verse, he stood up and **straightened his robes**. He fixed his collar and arranged his robes. He was never sloppy or careless, never let his

clothes get messed up. **And then** he **bowed in the midst of the assembly and placed palms together. The tracks of his mind were perfectly clear.** Ananda was not as confused as he was previously, **and he felt a mixture of joy and sorrow. His intent was to benefit beings in the future as he made obeisance and said to the Buddha…** Ananda didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Do you remember how easily Ananda cries? He's already cried several times since the start of the Sutra, and now he wants to cry again. But he also feels like laughing. What was his sorrow? As it is said:

Joy in extreme gives rise to sorrow.

He was totally happy, thinking, "Now I have the Buddhadharma; I understand the genuine Dharma"' He'd never felt such joy. But it wasn't enough to understand for himself; he wanted to benefit beings of the future. So he made obeisance to the Buddha and said, "**Greatly Compassionate World Honored One, I have already awakened and attained this Dharma-door for becoming a Buddha, and I can cultivate it without the slightest doubt.** I will cultivate by means of the Dharma and will never have any more doubts.

"I have often heard the Thus Come One say…" Ananda always has to substantiate what he says by making reference to the Buddha's own teaching. He says here, "I've heard the Buddha say, **'Save others first, then save yourself. That is the aspiration of a Bodhisattva.'**" Before one has attained the Way, one can go ahead and teach others. That's the way a Bodhisattva does it. **"Once your own enlightenment is perfected, then you can enlighten others. That is the way the Thus Come One responds to the world."** You help others wake up by means of the principles that you have awakened to. This is what the Buddha does. **"Although I am not yet saved, I vow to save all living beings in the Dharma-ending Age."** I haven't attained the Way yet, but I want to enable all beings in the final age to be taken across. I want them to attain the benefits of the Buddhadharma.

H2 On second request he speaks in detail.
I1 Ananda asks.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, those living beings will gradually drift away from the Buddha, and there will be as many deviant teachers propounding their methods as there are sands in the Ganges. I want to enable those beings to collect their thoughts and enter samadhi. How can I cause them to reside peacefully in a bodhimanda, far from the exploits of demons, and be irreversible in their resolve for Bodhi?"

Commentary:

"**World Honored One, those living beings will gradually drift away from the Buddha.** Beings in the Dharma-ending Age will gradually end up being very far away from the Buddha and even the Buddhadharma. **There will be as many deviant teachers propounding their methods as there are sands in the Ganges.**" That's the way it is now. Deviant teachers claim to understand things that they actually do not understand. Not enlightened, they say that they are. Not certified as sages, they say that they are. I ask them, "Have you been certified to the First Stage, the Second Stage, the Third, the Fourth? Which one? You're enlightened? What are you enlightened to?" It leaves them speechless. I pursue it: "You are a Buddha, and yet you can't even say what stage of fruition you have been certified to? How can you have jumped to Buddhahood?"

And yet they persist, claiming that not only are they themselves Buddhas, "Everybody is a Buddha." That is their theme. This is a great lie. When you haven't reached that state, you can't go shooting off your mouth. There's no one worse than a deviant teacher. Be careful not to become one, whether you understand the Buddhadharma or not. Don't be like one of them who was asked a point of Dharma and replied, "I'm getting old; I've forgotten." What did he mean, he'd forgotten? He never knew to begin with' That kind of talk is designed to cheat people. If you know, you say

that you know. If you don't know, you should say you don't know. You can't say you've forgotten when you basically don't even understand what's being asked.

When deviant teachers propound their methods, they are intent upon taking advantage of situations, and the doctrines they explain are wrong. For instance, sexual desire is wrong, but they say it is fine. "It's the most wonderful Dharma-door." They praise it, causing people to become confused and to be unable to distinguish true principle. What is wrong, they say is right; what is right, they say is wrong. They have deviant knowledge and deviant views. Their outlook is improper. "During the Dharma-ending Age," Ananda says, "such teachers will abound."

"**I want to enable those beings to collect their thoughts and enter samadhi.** Even though there will be as many deviant teachers in that age as there are sand grains in the Ganges, I still hope living beings will be able to give rise to proper knowledge and proper views. **How can I cause them to reside peacefully in a Bodhimanda far from the exploits of demons, and be irreversible in their resolve for Bodhi?**" For example, there are some deviant demons and externalist religions that do nothing but cheat people with their teachings. They talk a lot about the affairs of men and women and say that the heavier one's sexual desire, the faster one can become a Buddha. This is totally wrong, entirely deviant! You should be attentive to this point. Don't be cheated by such people. In the orthodox Dharma, any mention of sexual desire as favorable is wrong. Such methods of teaching are the exploits of demons.

Ananda wants to know how to help people of the final age not to retreat from Bodhi. Some people study the Buddhadharma for a while and then go back on their resolve. "I don't want to study the Buddhadharma. It's too difficult. I have to get rid of all my faults. But what if I can't? It's better if I just don't study." They lose their vigor. They admit defeat. They are overcome by demonic ghosts. Ananda wants to know how to keep this from happening.

I2 The Thus Come One answers.
J1 He promises to speak; they wish to listen.

Sutra:

At that time, the World Honored One praised Ananda in front of the whole assembly, saying, "Good indeed! How good it is that you have asked how to establish a Bodhimanda and to rescue and protect living beings who are sunk in the morass of the final age. Listen well, now, and I will tell you."

Ananda and the great assembly agreed to uphold the teaching.

Commentary:

Ananda said he wanted beings of the final age not to retreat from the resolve for Bodhi. He wanted them to have decisive faith, to vow to protect and uphold the Buddhadharma, to study and practice the Buddhadharma, and never to go back on their resolve. But how could he get them to be that way? When Shakyamuni Buddha heard Ananda ask that question, he was delighted. The Buddha is in a state of unmoving suchness, but when someone wants to protect the Buddhadharma and help people become Buddhas, it nonetheless makes him happy. **At that time, the World Honored One praised Ananda in front of the whole assembly, saying, "Good indeed!"** The Buddha was pleased. "You're really fine, Ananda. **How good it is**" – he praises him twice – "**that you have asked how to establish a Bodhimanda and to rescue and protect living beings who are sunk in the morass of the final age.** You want to help beings in the Dharma-ending Age who are being drowned in the water and consumed by the fire. **Listen well, now, and I will tell you.**"

Ananda and the great assembly agreed to uphold the teaching. When they heard the Buddha agree to speak the Dharma, their joy was even greater. The Buddha probably said, "Do you want to listen to this?"

Everyone undoubtedly answered, "We want to. We want to."

When deviant teachers explain their methods, their sole topic is sexual desire. The things they say are unprincipled. This should be distinguished clearly. Sometimes Bodhisattvas also use compassion, kind words, and a protective heart to teach living beings, because they know that all living beings are steeped in desire. Every living being has thoughts of sexual desire. So he does not expect them to cut off their love and desire immediately, but he uses all kinds of expedient means to get them to see through and renounce sexual desire. Then they can put a stop to it themselves. This is the state of a Bodhisattva, totally different from that of the deviant teachers of externalist ways.

Once, Gwan Yin Bodhisattva transformed into a fishmonger. She was an exquisite woman who went about the village with her fish-basket. No one in the village believed in the Buddha. But when the young men of the village caught sight of this maiden, they desired her. The village wasn't large, but there were at least a hundred young men there, and every one of them wanted to marry her. Gwan Yin with the fish basket said, "There are so many of you! I can't marry a hundred men, but I've thought of a method to choose a husband. I will marry whichever of the hundred of you is the first to be able to learn to recite by heart the 'Universal Door Chapter' of the *Lotus Sutra*. Go back home and I'll give you three days."

But, at the end of three days, there were forty or fifty who could recite it from memory. The woman with the fish basket said, "But there are still too many of you. Even though you have met the requirements, I can't have fifty husbands. This time go back and within five days memorize the *Vajra Sutra*. I'll marry whoever does that."

So the fifty who'd made it to the first level went back and began to practice the Vajra Sutra. At the end of five days there were some twenty who could recite it by heart. The fish monger said, "There are still too many of you. It's impossible for me to marry you all. I have one more task. Anyone who can memorize the *Lotus Sutra* in

seven days will be my husband. I believe whoever can do that will be worthy."

The twenty began to recite the *Lotus Sutra*, and at the end of seven days there was one man who could recite it from memory. He was named *Ma*, and came from a wealthy family. So there was a large wedding and everyone was invited. That evening, after the festivities, they retired, but who would have guessed that the bride would have a heart attack and die instantly? And the bridegroom had gone to so much effort! He'd memorized the "Universal Door Chapter," the *Vajra Sutra*, and the *Lotus Sutra*, and still he had no bride. Shortly thereafter, the funeral took place, and a monk in purple robes appeared on the scene. "What's going on?" he asked.

"Our new daughter-in-law passed away suddenly, and we are burying her."

"No," said the monk. "There's nothing in that coffin at all! Who are you mourning for? Open it and take a look."

Indeed, the coffin was empty. They were all amazed. "Where's she gone? After her! Bring her back!"

The monk told them, "That was Gwan Yin Bodhisattva. You people in this village didn't believe in the Buddha, so she manifested the appearance of a beautiful woman in order to get you young men who are so fond of forms to study the Buddhadharma. Then she left."

When the bridegroom, Ma, heard that, he renounced all worldly things and left the home-life. After that, he was certified to the fruition of a sage. That really happened in China.

J2 He brings up the three studies in general.

Sutra:

The Buddha told Ananda, "You constantly hear me explain in the Vinaya that there are three unalterable aspects to cultivation. That is, collecting one's thoughts constitutes the precepts; from the precepts comes samadhi; and out of samadhi

arises wisdom. Samadhi arises from precepts, and wisdom is revealed out of samadhi. These are called the 'Three Non-Outflow Studies.'

Commentary:

When everyone in the assembly had agreed to uphold the teaching, **the Buddha told Ananda, "You constantly hear me explain in the Vinaya that there are three unalterable aspects to cultivation."** The Vinaya includes the rules for both the greater and lesser vehicles. It discusses the precepts. These three fixed aspects are unalterable. **"That is, collecting one's thoughts constitutes the precepts."** These three are precepts, samadhi, and wisdom. You collect and maintain your thoughts, just as a magnet collects iron filings. This refers especially to our thoughts that "climb on conditions" – that take advantage of situations. When these thoughts take control, one is always paying attention to other people. One is continually thinking up ways to draw near to wealthy people or people in positions of authority. Such thoughts go on and on all day long. That's called "climbing on conditions;" it means that one has not collected one's thoughts. Collect those thoughts. Don't let them take advantage of situations. Don't let them run out at random. But our mind is such that it runs away with us, even if we don't want it to. We may forbid it to have false thinking, but in the next moment another false thought comes up. One ceases and the next one begins. The first thought dissolves, but the next one is already on its way. And before that one is completely gone, the next one has arisen. The mind that climbs on conditions never ceases. What you must do is to collect and maintain your thoughts. Bring your mind back to one point. The whole reason we can't become Buddhas, can't become enlightened, can't awaken to the Way, is that we do not have control of our mind. If you get your thoughts together, there is nothing you cannot do. You'll be successful at everything. The precepts, then, are designed to collect your thoughts. Precepts put a stop to evil and prevent further transgressions.

“Samadhi arises from precepts.” Holding precepts is like holding a bottle of muddy water still, until the silt settles and the water becomes clear. Samadhi means “not moving.” “And wisdom is revealed out of samadhi.” As Manjushri Bodhisattva’s verse said:

When stillness is ultimate,
the light penetrates.

You become enlightened. Within samadhi, your own genuine wisdom arises. **“These are called the ‘Three Non-outflow Studies.’”** Guard the precepts, and from the precepts will come samadhi. Out of samadhi will arise wisdom.

One Must Cut Off Lust

J3 He specifically lists the three studies.
K1 He lists the importance of the precepts first.
L1 He teaches him to hold precepts.
M1 He gathers in first and then gives evidence.
N1 One must cut off lust.
O1 Distinguishes the characteristic harm and benefit.
P1 First he explains the benefit or harm of holding or violating.
Q1 Holding it, then one certainly can get out of birth and death.

Sutra:

"Ananda, why do I call collecting one's thoughts the precepts? If living beings in the six paths of any mundane world had no thoughts of lust, they would not have to follow a continual succession of births and deaths.

Commentary:

"Ananda, why do I call collecting one's thoughts the precepts? Now I will tell you. If living beings in the six paths of any mundane world had no thoughts of lust": The six paths include gods, humans, asuras, animals, hungry ghosts, and beings in the hells. If they were free of thoughts of sexual desire, **"They would not have to follow a continual succession of births and deaths."** They could cut off birth and death.

Q2 Violating it, one certainly will fall into demonic paths.

Sutra:

"Your basic purpose in cultivating is to transcend the wearisome defilements. But if you don't renounce your lustful thoughts, you will not be able to get out of the dust.

Commentary:

The Buddha is speaking to Ananda here when he says, **"Your basic purpose in cultivating is to transcend the wearisome defilements."** You want to get out of birth and death. **"But if you don't renounce your lustful thoughts, you will not be able to get out of the dust."** If you do not cut off sexual desire, it will be impossible to get out of the mundane defilements of the world. That's because thoughts of sexual desire are themselves defiling. They themselves are the wearisome dust. Not to speak of engaging in lustful practices, even the presence of such thoughts is unclean. If you don't renounce sexual desire, it's entirely unreasonable to hope to become enlightened and accomplish Buddhahood. To hold on to sexual desire on the one hand and expect to become enlightened on the other is the stupidest kind of thinking. People who think that way are impossible to teach. Even if Shakyamuni Buddha himself appeared in the world right now, he would have no way to bring such people to attainment of fruition. Such people are the most dull-witted of all.

Sutra:

"Even though one may have some wisdom and the manifestation of Ch'an samadhi, one is certain to enter demonic paths if one does not cut off lust. At best, one will be a demon king; on the average, one will be in the retinue of demons; at the lowest level, one will be a female demon.

Commentary:

"Even though one may have some wisdom and the manifestation of Ch'an samadhi, one is certain to enter demonic paths if one does not cut off lust." You may be wise, and when you sit

down to meditation you may experience light ease and feel extremely comfortable – that is, you can enter Ch'an samadhi. You think you're wise, then? If you don't put a stop to lust, you'll end up a demon! **"At best, one will be a demon king** in the Sixth Desire Heaven. **On the average, one will be in the retinue of demons.** One will become an ordinary demon. **At the lowest level, one will be a female demon."** They are beautiful, but extremely coarse. People with wisdom should be careful. Smart people should take careful note of this passage. Don't let your intelligence go back on you so that you make a mistake in the end. Don't have the attitude: "You don't understand, but I do. You're not clear, but I am." That's petty intelligence, petty wisdom. Don't let a promising future go to ruin.

Sutra:

"These demons have their groups of disciples. Each says of himself that he has accomplished the Unsurpassed Way.

Commentary:

These people with a little wisdom who do not cut off their lust are always talking about love and desire. "I love you, you love me," and they love back and forth until they become demonic. Then what happens? **"These demons have their groups of disciples. Each says of himself that he has accomplished the unsurpassed Way."** They, too, will have disciples and protectors. Totally without shame, they will loudly pronounce that they have achieved the highest path. "I'm a Buddha! We are all supreme and unsurpassed!" Basically such people are demons, but they don't admit to it; they profess instead to be Buddhas. You see, there are even phony Buddhas. But they don't see themselves as phony; they think they are for real. They believe :

In heaven above, on earth below
I alone am honored.

P2 He discusses the behavior of demons within Buddhism.
Q1 Greed for lust turns the world.

Sutra:

"After my extinction, in the Dharma-ending Age, these hordes of demons will abound, spreading like wildfire as they openly practice greed and lust. Claiming to be good knowing advisors, they will cause living beings to fall into the pit of love and views and lose the way to Bodhi.

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha said, "While I'm in the world, such demons will not dare to show themselves, but **after my extinction, in the Dharma-ending Age, these hordes of demons will abound.**" It is just our present age that is being referred to here, when the Dharma is about to die out. There are simply too many of these demons around, going about everywhere discussing sexual desire. And they themselves revel in lust, be they men or women. At the same time, they think that they are enlightened and have become Buddhas.

How is it that I recognize such people as these, such as the one who says he's a Buddha – we won't mention any names. He said he was a Buddha, and I said he was a demon.

"Who's a demon'?" he said.

"You are," I replied. How did I know? He's just like what's described here. He's always talking about emotion and love. "Love, love. I love everybody"' It's really shameless. What right do you have to be in love with everyone? These demons abound, **"spreading like wildfire as they openly practice greed and lust."** They'll be all the rage in the world. Ignorant people will be taken in by them, thinking what they have to say makes sense. It will especially agree with young people's way of thinking. As the saying goes, "persons of similar (atrocious) tastes get together. They praise one another as they go down this road. If they didn't agree with each other's ideas, they wouldn't do that. If people's

paths are not in agreement, they won't collaborate with one another. But if their thinking is the same, then the blind can lead the blind. How pitiful' I'm not scolding people here, but

If one who is dazed
transmits the delusion to another,
When all is said and done,
neither one understands.
The teacher falls into the hells,
And the disciples burrow in after him.

The teacher winds up in the hells, and when his disciples show up there as well, he is surprised. "How did you get here? This is a terrible place"'

"You came first, and you're our teacher, so of course we would follow you," they reply.

"Claiming to be good knowing advisors": they boast, "I give lectures all over the place to lots of people." Ridiculous! **"They will cause living beings to fall into the pit of love and views and lose the Way to Bodhi."** They cause all they come in contact with to fall into the pit of sexual desire. They forfeit Bodhi and end up in the hells.

Q2 Teaching people to cut off lust is the Buddha's instruction.

Sutra:

"When you teach people in the world to cultivate samadhi, they must first of all sever the mind of lust. This is the first clear and unalterable instruction on purity given by the Thus Come Ones and the Buddhas of the past, World Honored Ones.

Commentary:

Demon kings advocate love. The difference between that and the teaching of a Bodhisattva is ever so slight – like the flip of a hand. In what way is it different? Bodhisattvas also love people, but their love is a compassionate and protective kind, devoid of sexual

desire. But there is a current of lust that runs through everything a demon king says. He openly advocates it, to the point that he says that the heavier one's sexual desire, the higher the level of enlightenment one can reach. This kind of deviant doctrine harms people. Bodhisattvas have no lust; they do not make distinctions between living beings and themselves. Demons have motives; they are greedy for things. Bodhisattvas have no ulterior motives and are not greedy. In regard to this, the Buddha's teaching explains the twelve causal conditions.

"When you teach people in the world to cultivate samadhi, they must first of all sever the mind of lust. Teach them to cut off their thoughts of sexual desire. **This is the first clear and unalterable instruction on purity given by the Thus Come Ones and the Buddhas of the Past, World Honored Ones."** This is the method of teaching used by the Thus Come Ones. It is the resolution of all the Buddhas of the past. This is clear instruction that teaches people how to be pure. One must cut off lust. This is a fixed principle. It is not the least bit flexible. It's not to say that one can have lust or not have it. One must get rid of it. If you want to be enlightened and also hold on to your thoughts of lust, then you certainly will join the retinue of demons.

P3 Decides if the bodhimanda can be accomplished.
Q1 An analogy shows that if one doesn't cut off lust, Bodhi can't be obtained.

Sutra:

"Therefore, Ananda, if cultivators of Ch'an samadhi do not cut off lust, they will be like someone who cooks sand in the hope of getting rice. After hundreds of thousands of aeons, it will still be just hot sand. Why? It wasn't rice to begin with; it was only sand.

Commentary:

You see, now he brings up an analogy. He tells Ananda, "You don't believe it, so I'll explain the principle for you. **Therefore, Ananda, if cultivators of Ch'an samadhi do not cut off lust, they will be like someone who cooks sand in the hope of getting rice.**"

If one does not sever sexual desire and yet cultivates and meditates every day, then one will cultivate on the one hand, and have outflows on the other. Everything one gains will be dissipated. Whatever one gains in cultivation will be lost tenfold in outflows; if one cultivates ten times as much, one will lose a hundred times as much in outflows. Unable to renounce sexual desire, one still sits in meditation with the hope of getting enlightened, with the aim of getting a little upside-down bliss. This is just like cooking sand in the hope of getting rice. “**After hundreds of thousands of aeons, it will still be just hot sand.** It’s useless. **Why? It wasn’t rice to begin with; it was only sand.** You expect to become enlightened without giving up sexual desire? It’s the same as expecting to get rice from sand.”

There’s something else to be said here. If you can sever sexual desire, then even if you are together with the opposite sex all day long, there will be no problem. There won’t be any sexual desire, any appearance of male or female, any appearance of people, of self, of living beings, or of a lifespan. Some people know no shame and say, “That’s the way I am.” To just say you’re that way isn’t enough. There’s no proof. How do you know you’re that way? If you were that way, you basically wouldn’t recognize that you were. You couldn’t have the idea that you didn’t have any sexual desire. If you don’t, you simply don’t. You wouldn’t go around advertising it. That just shows that you really aren’t that way. If you really don’t have any sexual desire, then

The eyes see forms appear,
but inside there is nothing.
The ears hear defiling sounds,
but the mind does not know of them.

No matter how pleasing a sound the ear picks up, your mind is unaware of it. Then you’ve got a little going for you. And then if you can reach the point that you can walk, sit, and lie down together with someone of the opposite sex without there being any incident – any arisal of thoughts of sexual desire – and really have there be

none – that will count. It's not to say that your mind still races but you grit your teeth and say firmly, "I can take it." That doesn't count. It has to be that not one thought arises-the mind does not move, that there basically is no trace of lust in your heart. That's genuine. If you occasionally are still aware of what women ate all about, then you've failed the test.

Once there was someone who got enlightened and went to seek certification from his teacher. "What enlightenment have you opened?" his teacher asked.

His reply was, "Oh, before I never realized it, but now I know that bhikshunis are women." His teacher checked him out with the Buddha Eye and saw that indeed he was enlightened. "You're all right," he said in certification.

"Who doesn't know that?" you say.

If you weren't enlightened, you wouldn't even say that much. It was because he had awakened that he voiced that observation. This is not something you can cheat people with – especially since his teacher had the Buddha Eye open. He looked at him and knew that he had realized the first fruition of Arhatship.

Sutra:

"If you seek the Buddha's wonderful fruition and still have physical lust, then even if you attain a wonderful awakening, it will be based in lust. With lust at the source, you will revolve in the three paths and not be able to get out. Which road will you take to cultivate and be certified to the Thus Come One's Nirvana?

Commentary:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "Your fondness for Matangi's daughter not only involved thoughts of lust; you still had physical lust, as well. **If you see the Buddha's wonderful fruition and still have physical lust, then even if you attain a wonderful awakening, it will be based in lust.** Although you may attain the subtle principles at the heart of it, you still have not gotten rid of the

roots of lust. **With lust at the source, you will revolve in the Three Paths and not be able to get out.** In the future you will certainly fall into the hells. The "Three Paths" are those of animals, hungry ghosts, and beings in the hells. And you will just revolve in these three and be unable to leave them. **Which road will you take to cultivate and be certified to the Thus Come One's Nirvana?** Which of these paths will lead you to that fruition?

Q2 Diligently and profoundly cutting off lust can bring accomplishment.

Sutra:

"You must cut off the lust which is intrinsic in both body and mind. Then get rid of even the aspect of cutting it off. At that point you have some hope of attaining the Buddha's Bodhi.

Commentary:

"**You must cut off the lust which is intrinsic in both body and mind.** You definitely must get rid of the most subtle and fine, the most infinitesimal single thought of lust. That just means that ignorance itself must go. It must be done both physically and mentally. **Then get rid of even the aspect of cutting it off.** You cannot even be aware of having cut it off. **At that point you have some hope of attaining the Buddha's Bodhi.**

O2 He speaks of the divisions of deviant and proper.

Sutra:

"What I have said here is the Buddha's teaching. Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of Papiyan.

Commentary:

"**What I have said here is the Buddha's teaching.** This is the way the Buddhas explain the Dharma. **Any explanation counter to it is thc teaching of Papiyan**, methods taught by a demon king. "Papiyan" is a Sanskrit term that means "evil one" and refers to Mara, the demon king.

People who come to listen to the Sutras must certainly be able to see. The blind cannot come to hear the Sutras, nor can the deaf or dumb. The more the people come to hear, the smarter they get. Everyone should open his eye of genuine wisdom and truly turn the organ of the ear back to the self-nature. Do not seek outside.

One Must Cut Off Killing

N2 One must cut off killing.
O1 He distinguishes the characteristic harm and benefit.
P1 First he explains the benefit or harm of holding or violating.
Q1 Holding it, then one certainly can get out of birth and death.

Sutra:

"Further, Ananda, if living beings in the six paths of any mundane world had no thoughts of killing, they would not have to follow a continual succession of births and deaths.

Commentary:

If gods, humans, asuras, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell-dwellers did not harbor thoughts of killing, but instead ceased killing and liberated the living, they could get out of birth and death. Here the reference is to mere thoughts of killing, not to mention acts of killing. If one ceases killing, one does not have to undergo rebirth in the six paths and be subject to the karma that accompanies the process of birth and death.

Q2 Violating it, one certainly will fall into the path of spirits.

Sutra:

"Your basic purpose in cultivating samadhi is to transcend the wearisome defilements. But if you do not renounce your thoughts of killing, you will not be able to get out of the dust.

Commentary:

"Ananda, you want to cultivate samadhi power. **Your basic purpose in cultivating samadhi is to transcend the wearisome defilements.** Your hope from the beginning has been to get out of the mundane dust. **But if you do not renounce your thoughts of killing, you will not be able to get out of the dust.**" How can one get rid of thoughts of killing? Cease killing and liberate the living. Above, the text says, "If you do not renounce your lustful thoughts, you cannot get out of the dust." You must sever thoughts of sexual desire in order to be free of defilements. That's the only way you can transcend the cycle of rebirth in the six paths. But if you dispense with your thoughts of lust and still harbor thoughts of killing, you still cannot get out of the mundane world. You cannot transcend rebirth.

Sutra:

"Even though one may have some wisdom and the manifestation of Ch'an samadhi, one is certain to enter the path of spirits if one does not cease killing. At best, a person will become a mighty ghost; on the average, one will become a flying yaksha, a ghost leader, or the like; at the lowest level, one will become an earth-bound rakshasa.

Commentary:

"Even though one may have some wisdom and the manifestation of Ch'an samadhi, one is certain to enter the path of spirits if one does not cease killing." "Wisdom" here refers to worldly intelligence and skill in debate, not to transcendental wisdom. It is an ordinary kind of wisdom that enables one to have a certain amount of eloquence. And even if you have cultivated to the point that you have *gung fu* in Ch'an – you've had some responses – still, if you don't get rid of thoughts of killing, you'll fall into the realm of spirits. This means you might become a ruling god in the heavens. **"At best, a person will become a mighty ghost,** that is, a powerful heavenly general. **On the average, one will become a flying yaksha."** The mighty ghosts are heaven-

traveling yakshas; the flying yakshas travel in space. Or one will become **"a ghost leader, or the like.** One will be a ghost who commands other ghosts. **At the lowest level, one will be an earth-bound rakshasa."**

Sutra:

"These ghosts and spirits have their groups of disciples. Each says of himself that he has accomplished the Unsurpassed Way.

Commentary:

The ruling gods, the mighty ghosts in the heavens, the yakshas and rakshasas in the human realm, and the ghosts in the hells also have a lot of followers. There are rich ghosts, ghosts with a little wealth, and poor ghosts. There are tens of thousands of varieties of ghosts. Kuan Ti Kung in China is an example of a wealthy ghost. But after he took refuge with the Buddha, he came to be known as Ch'ieh Lan Bodhisattva, a Dharma-protecting spirit. In the Buddha's assembly he must stand; he has no seat assignment. However, the ghosts referred to here claim to have attained the Supreme Way.

P2 He discusses the behavior of demons within Buddhism.
Q1 Eating flesh turns the world into a teaching by ghosts.

Sutra:

"After my extinction, in the Dharma-ending Age, these hordes of ghosts and spirits will abound, spreading like wildfire as they argue that eating meat will bring one to the Bodhi Way.

Commentary:

"After my extinction, in the Dharma-ending Age, these hordes of ghosts and spirits will abound." That's the present time he's talking about – the age that you and I live in. There are innumerable ghosts and spirits in this Dharma-ending Age, all because in former lives they could not stop killing. They practiced cultivation, but could not cease killing, and so they fell into the path of the spirits. In the Dharma-ending Age, these beings will be

"spreading like wildfire as they argue that eating meat will bring one to the Bodhi Way." They say, "I eat meat and I've become a Buddha just the same. I didn't have to stop killing or eat vegetarian food, but I'm enlightened and have attained the Bodhi Way, that is, I am a Buddha." This is like a certain person who claims to be enlightened but who eats meat, drinks alcohol, smokes cigarettes, and has a group of young followers that he teaches to smoke marijuana and take LSD Who ever heard of someone enlightened behaving like that? When the Buddha himself became enlightened, he did not use such dope. Now you take pills that poison your system, upset your energy balance, and bring you to the brink of death, and you still insist you are enlightened. Is that upside down or not? I ask you .

Sutra:

"Ananda, I permit the Bhikshus to eat five kinds of pure meat. This meat is actually a transformation brought into being by my spiritual powers. It basically has no life-force. You Brahmans live in a climate so hot and humid, and on such sandy and rocky land, that vegetables will not grow; therefore, I have had to assist you with spiritual powers and compassion. Because of the magnitude of this kindness and compassion, what you eat that tastes like meat is merely said to be meat; in fact, however, it is not. After my extinction, how can those who eat the flesh of living beings be called the disciples of Shakya?

Commentary:

"Ananda, I permit the Bhikshus to eat five kinds of pure meat." The Buddha's teaching allows these five kinds:

1) Flesh of an animal that I did not see killed.
2) Flesh of an animal that I did not hear killed.
3) Flesh of an animal that I am sure was not killed for my sake.
4) Flesh of an animal that died by itself.

5) Flesh that is the leavings of an animal after birds have scavenged.

"This meat is actually a transformation brought into being by my spiritual powers. It basically has no life-force." The Buddha created these kinds of flesh; they are not from living creatures. They have no life-force; that is, no consciousness, no temperature, and no breath. "**You Brahmans live in a climate so hot and humid, and on such sandy and rocky land, that vegetables will not grow.** You who practice pure conduct live in a land full of sand and dampness. **Therefore, I have had to assist you with spiritual powers and compassion. Because of the magnitude of this kindness and compassion, what you eat that tastes like meat is merely said to be meat; in fact, however, it is not.** That's what you are really eating. I allow you to eat this kind of meat at present. But, **after my extinction, how can those who eat the flesh of living beings be called the disciples of Shakya?"** They are not eating the five kinds of pure meat; they are just eating the flesh of living beings outright. Are they to be known as disciples of the Buddha? They cannot be referred to as disciples of Shakya, that is, people who left the home life.

Sutra:

"You should know that these people who eat meat may gain some awareness and may seem to be in samadhi, but they are all great rakshasas. When their retribution ends, they are bound to sink into the bitter sea of birth and death. They are not disciples of the Buddha. Such people as these kill and eat one another in a never-ending cycle. How can such people transcend the Triple Realm?

Commentary:

"**You should know that these people who eat meat may gain some awareness and may seem to be in samadhi, but they are all great rakshasas.** They pay no attention to what kind of flesh they are eating. They don't care whether it is one of the three kinds of pure meat or the five kinds of pure meat; if it's meat, they'll eat it.

Ananda, you should realize that after my extinction such beings will pretend to be disciples of the Buddha and will consume both alcohol and meat. They'll be completely uninhibited, saying that everyone is free to do as he or she pleases. Although they may attain a small state of awakening or gain a little wisdom, they will only appear to be in samadhi." Actually they are not. They are like the person who came here and claimed he was the same as the Six Patriarch.

"What evidence do you have that you are the same?" I asked him.

He replied, "I don't have any evidence that I'm not the same." He thought that was a wise answer. Actually, he was in a class with the beings described in this passage. Such people may seem to have a little samadhi power, but in fact they are great rakshasas – big demons, big ghosts.

"**When their retribution ends they are bound to sink into the bitter sea of birth and death. They are not disciples of the Buddha.** Although such people wear the Buddha's clothes and eat the Buddha's food, they are not disciples of the Buddha. **Such people as these kill and eat one another in a never-ending cycle.** They take life and eat meat and do not prohibit either one. They keep eating one another; you eat me, and I eat you; kill and eat, be killed and eaten. **How can such people transcend the triple realm?**" Behavior like this sets up an endless cycle. In this life, you eat my flesh; and in the next life, I eat yours. In the life after that, it's your turn to eat me again, and it goes on and on. How can such beings get out of the Desire Realm, the Form Realm, and the Formless Realm?

Q2 Teaching people to cut off killing is the Buddha's instruction.

Sutra:

"When you teach people in the world to cultivate samadhi, they must also cut off killing. This is the second clear and

unalterable instruction on purity given by the Thus Come Ones and the Buddhas of the past, World Honored Ones.

Commentary:

"**When you teach people in the world to cultivate samadhi, they must also cut off killing.** First, they must cut off sexual desire; they must also sever their thoughts of killing. **This is the second clear and unalterable instruction on purity given by the Thus Come One and the Buddhas of the past, World Honored Ones.**" This is the teaching advocated by the Buddha. Both the Buddhas of the past and the Buddhas of the present teach this second clear and fixed instruction on purity. You must certainly revere it. If you don't, you won't be able to get out of the triple realm.

P3 He decides if liberation can be obtained.
Q1 An analogy makes clear, if one doesn't cut off killing it is difficult to get free.

Sutra:

"Therefore, Ananda, if cultivators of Ch'an samadhi do not cut off killing, they are like one who stops up his ears and calls out in a loud voice, expecting no one to hear him. It is to wish to hide what is completely evident.

Commentary:

"Therefore, Ananda, if cultivators of Ch'an samadhi do not cut off killing, they sever their compassionate seeds. Once they have lost their sense of compassion, **they are like one who stops up his ears and calls out in a loud voice, expecting no one to hear him."** This is known as plugging up one's ears while one steals a bell; one supposes that if one can't hear oneself, no one else can either. **"It is to wish to hide what is completely evident."** The more one wishes to cover up one's conduct, the more it is revealed. In the same way, someone who practices samadhi but does not stop killing will find it impossible to realize his expectations.

Sutra:

"Bodhisattvas and bhikshus who practice purity will not even step on grass in the pathway; even less will they pull it up with their hand. How can one with great compassion pick up the flesh and blood of living beings and proceed to eat his fill?

Commentary:

"Bodhisattvas and bhikshus who practice purity until their conduct is extremely pure and lofty, **will not even step on grass in the pathway."** At a place where several paths come together there is usually grass growing in the walkway. A pure bhikshu or Bodhisattva will not walk on growing grass. It could kill the grass. **"Even less will they pull it up with their hand.** They don't do any weeding. **How can one with great compassion pick up the flesh and blood of living beings and proceed to eat his fill?"** That is not permissible.

Q2 If one diligently and profoundly cuts off killing, one can get free.

Sutra:

"Bhikshus who do not wear silk, leather boots, furs, or down from this country or consume milk, cream, or butter can truly transcend this world. When they have paid back their past debts, they will not have to re-enter the Triple Realm.

Commentary:

"Bhikshus who do not wear silk, leather boots, furs, or down from this country, or consume milk, cream, or butter can truly transcend the world." Silk, leather, furs, and down come from living creatures. The life of the creature must be taken in order to make these things. Ordinary cotton is not included here. Therefore, they don't wear leather shoes or carry leather bags. Nor do they use milk products. **"When they have paid back their past debts, they will not have to re-enter the Triple Realm."** It says here that milk and milk products should not be ingested, but in the precepts of the greater and lesser vehicles it does not state that one must certainly refrain from these things. This passage of Sutra text is describing

those who hold precepts with a maximum of purity. They thoroughly uphold the precept against killing. They do not use anything that has any connection with living creatures. They don't wear silk because a lot of silkworms' lives must be spent in the process of obtaining the silk. They don't eat honey, because it is made from bees. But in the Vinaya proper this is an open question. There is room for flexibility. The precepts do not specifically forbid these things. For you to avoid using them is to be extremely pure. It is very good.

Sutra:

"Why? It is because when one wears something taken from a living creature, one creates conditions with it, just as when people eat the hundred grains, their feet cannot leave the earth. Both physically and mentally one must avoid the bodies and the by-products of living beings, by neither wearing them nor eating them. I say that such people have true liberation.

Commentary:

"Why? It is because when one wears something taken from a living creature, one creates conditions with it." For example, when you wear silk, you have a connection with the worms that made it. If you don't want to be that kind of creature, you should sever connections with it. It is **"just as when people eat the hundred grains, their feet cannot leave the earth."** The first people on earth were actually heavenly beings that came down from the Great Brahma Heaven. This happened in the past when the fire of the kalpa raged over the earth until it had destroyed all signs of people. Afterward there began a barren period which extended for one knows not how long. And then, one day some heavenly beings flew down from the Brahma Heaven and alighted on earth. By this time, the earth was covered with a special something that looked quite good. They picked some and found it to be fragrant as well. So they ate it. Once they ate this "fat of the land," they could no longer fly. They couldn't mount the clouds and drive the fog. No longer mobile, they stood on earth and called out to their brothers

and sisters who happened by in space. These heavenly beings landed and also partook of the "fat of the land," and so they too became earth-bound. They couldn't go back to the heavens; and that's how the human race came to be on earth. Some people hold that we came from monkeys. But if that's the case, what keeps us from turning back into monkeys? In fact, it all started when the heavenly beings came down to earth. As the number of people increased, the fat of the land was entirely consumed, and that whole species of plant died out. Then they had to eat "the hundred grains." They are:

1. twenty varieties of rice,
2. twenty varieties of millet,
3. twenty varieties of beans,
4. twenty varieties of vegetables,
5. twenty varieties of melons.

There were more or less twenty kinds of each, making a hundred varieties in all. Once they ate them, "their feet couldn't leave the earth." We ascribe it to gravity, but the reason behind it is that people consume this kind of food.

"Both physically and mentally one must avoid the bodies and by-products of living beings, by neither wearing them nor eating them." We people want to keep our bodies and minds free from karma created in connection with the bodies of other living creatures or with anything that comes from them. One cannot physically take life, nor can one do so mentally. One should not wear anything connected with the life of another being or eat the flesh of their bodies. "I say that such people have true liberation." They have really become free.

O2 He speaks of the division into deviant and proper.

Sutra:

"What I have said here is the Buddha's teaching. Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of Papiyan.

Commentary:

What I have said here is the Buddha's teaching. My explanation is the Dharma spoken by the Buddhas of the ten directions and the three periods of time. **Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of Papiyan.** Any doctrine that agrees with my principle is Dharma that the Buddhas speak. Any theory that disagrees with the principles I have explained here is the talk of a demon king.

Now that you are hearing the *Shurangama Sutra*, you can use it as a freak-spotting mirror. If someone is pretending to be a person and you shine the mirror on him, he will be revealed in his true form – a weirdo. Perhaps he's a pig-spirit or a cow-spirit or a horse-spirit or a mountain essence or water-monster. Maybe it's a ghost king. Whatever it might be, the mirror will show it up. Now that you've heard the *Shurangama Sutra*, you will be able to know whether someone is speaking the Dharma correctly by comparing it to what is told in this Sutra. So it is like a freak-spotting mirror. That's why I said earlier that the blind, deaf, and dumb have no chance to hear my explanation of the Sutra. The deaf basically can't hear it, but here I'm not referring to people who are physically deaf, but to people who hear the Dharma and yet are deaf to it. Mutes also miss the point when I lecture. I hope that all of you who are able to hear the *Shurangama Sutra* will become Good Knowing Advisors in the future; that you will come to genuinely understand the Buddhadharma. Then you can teach the blind, deaf, and mute. When you lecture, you can use an amplifying system, and then even though they are outside, they will be able to hear and will no longer be deaf or mute. People who don't understand the Buddhadharma are most pitiful. So, when you have mastered the Buddhadharma, you should go teach it to others. That means that at this stage you should pay special attention as you study.

One Must Cut Off Stealing

N3 One must cut off stealing.
O1 He distinguishes the characteristic harm and benefit.
P1 First he discusses the benefit or harm of holding or violating.
Q1 Holding it, one then certainly can get out of birth and death.

Sutra:

"Further, Ananda, if living beings in the six paths of any mundane world had no thoughts of stealing, they would not have to follow a continuous succession of births and deaths.

Commentary:

The Buddha again calls out to Ananda, **"Further, Ananda, if living beings in the six paths of any mundane world had no thoughts of stealing, they would not have to follow a continuous succession of births and deaths."** The gods, people, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell-dwellers would not steal, even in their minds. They wouldn't steal anything whatsoever, be it visible or invisible, valuable or worthless. Not only not actually taking it, but not even having the thought of taking it arises in one's mind: that is what is meant by not stealing. If they could refrain from stealing as well as from lust and killing, they wouldn't get involved in the continuity of birth and death, and they would also be free of the continuity of karmic retribution and from the continuity of the world.

Q2 Violating it, one certainly will fall into deviant paths.

Sutra:

"Your basic purpose in cultivating samadhi is to transcend the wearisome defilements. But if you do not renounce your thoughts of stealing, you will not be able to get out of the dust.

Commentary:

"Your basic purpose in cultivating samadhi is to transcend the wearisome defilements. You want to develop proper concentration. Your original reason for this was to get out of the cycle of rebirths in the mundane world. But, if you still have ideas about stealing things, **but if you do not renounce your thoughts of stealing, you will not be able to get out of the dust."** "Dust" refers to the burning house of the Triple Realm.

Sutra:

"Even though one may have some wisdom and the manifestation of Ch'an samadhi, one is certain to enter a devious path if one does not cease stealing. At best, one will be an apparition; on the average, one will become a phantom; at the lowest level, one will be a devious person who is possessed by a mei ghost.

Commentary:

"Even though one may have some wisdom and the manifestation of Ch'an samadhi, one is certain to enter a devious path if one does not cease stealing." Basically, this kind of person has no genuine wisdom, for if he did, he would not steal, nor would he lust, nor would he kill. It's just because he lacks genuine wisdom that he does these things. But let us allow that someone like this has a little wisdom and is just a trifle smarter than the average person, and when he sits he slips into an oblivion that's more or less like samadhi. Yet, this person thinks that he has achieved some incredible state which no one else has ever come close to. He feels he has skill which surpasses everyone else's. His views are arrogant, and if he doesn't stop stealing, he will fall into a devious path. Even with a little wisdom and a little samadhi, one will fall

into an improper state of being because of stealing. On this devious path, one will teach others ways which are dark and incorrect. One will teach people deviant knowledge and deviant views. **“At best, one will be an apparition.”** When you see such a being, he appears to be extremely intelligent; but, in fact, he is false. In the Chinese text *The Nature of Medicine*, there is mention of herbs endowed with this essence, but, in fact, the essence is not real. **“On the average, one will become a phantom,”** a strange being who possesses spiritual powers and can harm people. **“At the lowest level, one will be a devious person who is possessed by a mei ghost.”** You remember that the kumbhanda was a mei ghost who could cause paralysis in a person during sleep. The kind of ghost mentioned here takes over a person who is awake and manipulates his body, mouth, and mind for its own purposes. It speaks through the person and can gain complete control of him.

These people are what are known as mediums, or they can sometimes become sorcerers or exorcists. In America, I encountered a person like this, an American who said he was Jesus. A minute later he would announce that God had come upon him to speak. Then, after a time he would announce that Jesus had come and wanted to talk to him. It was about five years ago when he came to see me. I scolded him. I said, “You don’t even recognize yourself. You are a demonic ghost through and through, and you are up to no good.” He didn’t like the phrase “demonic ghost,” so he left. He came to discuss doctrine with me, but he never returned after I scolded him. And I thought to myself, “I don’t know how to talk to people. Why did I scare away that ‘Jesus-God’?” Anyway, that’s an example of this kind of devious person. Why do they have that kind of karmic retribution? It is because in former lives they stole things, and so they are bound to fall into one of these three categories.

Sometimes in China these mediums were pretty spectacular. They could stick a knife in the crown of their heads and yet not die. The spirit possessing them would remove the blade by the use of a mantra in such a way that the person didn’t even bleed. Some would

pound nails into their shoulders, and from the nails they would hang several swords weighing more than ten pounds each. They could hang four of them and then spin them. It was awesome to watch. People were terrified. Sometimes they were really talented. I've seen a lot of these devious demons and adherents of externalist ways. When you look into the *Shurangama Sutra*, you realize that long ago the Buddha described all the different kinds of beings in the world very clearly. Therefore, having heard the *Shurangama Sutra*, you should be able to recognize whatever you come up against.

This section is called the "Four Clear and Unalterable Instructions on Purity," and it is an extremely important passage of this Sutra. So pay close attention.

If one can't stop stealing, one will find it impossible to become a Buddha, however much one hopes to become one. Now that we understand this doctrine, people who do steal should change. Those who don't should not let thoughts of stealing arise. That is how to be most in accord with the Way.

Sutra:

"These devious hordes have their groups of disciples. Each says of himself that he has accomplished the Unsurpassed Way.

Commentary:

"**These devious hordes** are phantoms, demons, ghosts, and weird beings, and the *li*, *mei*, and *wang liang* ghosts that harm people. They all **"have their groups of disciples."** In this world, every category of being has its followers. As it says,

> *The good gather together;*
> *The bad form gangs;*
> *People find people who are like themselves.*

So, even these devious ghosts and demons mass together and have their devotees. **"Each says of himself that he has accomplished the unsurpassed Way."** They do not recognize what is truly

supreme, but instead contend that their way of doing things is the best. They say they have attained the highest way possible, even to the point that they take the Buddha's name in vain and say that's what they are. "Just take a look at the magnitude of my spiritual powers," they argue. But, in fact, they are phantoms, demons, ghosts, and weird beings. They are thoroughly improper in their conduct .

P2 He discusses the behavior of weird beings within Buddhism.
Q1 Hidden influences are the teachings of weird beings.

Sutra:

"After my extinction, in the Dharma-ending Age, these phantoms and apparitions will abound, spreading like wildfire as they surreptitiously cheat others. Calling themselves good knowing advisors, they will each say that they have attained the superhuman dharmas. Enticing and deceiving the ignorant, or frightening them out of their wits, they disrupt and lay waste to households wherever they go.

Commentary:

I've met very many of these demonic ghosts. Westerners may not be too familiar with these strange things, but it's not just that they come to be because Chinese people believe in ghosts and spirits. It's just that, as time goes on, the strange phenomena that appear in the world become more numerous.

"After my extinction, in the Dharma-ending Age, these phantoms and apparitions will abound." Shakyamuni Buddha is telling us here that the age we live in will be plagued with such deviant creatures. We people shouldn't have to see things for ourselves to believe they exist. There are simply too many things in the world which one will never see. If we had to wait until we had seen each and every one of them with our own eyes, we wouldn't be done looking in this lifetime. There are some things you just have to take others' word for. "They spread **like wildfire as they surreptitiously cheat others.**" They will be like a fire that literally burns people up. People who don't recognize these devious beings

will fall in with them and it will be just as if they had stepped into a raging fire. The person will be burned. “Secret and hidden” means they will go about cheating others.

“Calling themselves good knowing advisors, they will each say that they have attained the superhuman dharmas.” They will speak of themselves as Bright-eyed Good Knowing Advisors. “Superhuman” refers to a Bodhisattva. In other words, they will say they are Bodhisattvas. In Buddhism, even though you are a Bodhisattva, or even a Buddha who has come again, you cannot say that you are a Buddha or a Bodhisattva. You must keep silent about it so long as you live, down to your last breath. “I’m a Buddha!” “I’m a Bodhisattva!” “I’m an Arhat!” You cannot speak like that. Anyone who speaks like that is a demonic ghost, just like the ones being described here. When can you let it be known? After you die. Then people ought to know. But you cannot let people know who you are before you die. What meaning would there be in your announcing that you are a Buddha? What meaning? You say you are a Bodhisattva? Why? What is your meaning in saying so? There could be no other reason than to get people to believe in you. And why would you want people to believe in you? So they will give you money. You do it to take advantage of situations and climb on conditions. If that’s not your intent, then why would you be telling people you are a living Buddha? If you are a Bodhisattva, fine, you’re a Bodhisattva; what would you be doing telling people so?

That reminds me of something that happened once in China. An official once went to Kuo Ch’ing Monastery on Tyan Tai Mountain to ask questions of the Abbot Feng Kan. The official and the Abbot chatted. What was the official’s name, you wonder? Don’t ask me; I’ve forgotten. Perhaps it was you, or perhaps it was me; it’s not for certain. The official said to the Abbot, “In the past, there used to be a lot of Bodhisattvas who came into the world, but there aren’t any in this day and age. I’d like to meet a genuine Bodhisattva, but I can’t find one.”

Abbot Feng Kan said, “Oh, you want to see a Bodhisattva? We have two here. I’ll introduce you to them, and you can go see them.”

The official was duly surprised, “Two Bodhisattvas, right here? You mean ones made of clay, or carved wooden ones?”

“No,” replied the Abbot. “These two are flesh-body Bodhisattvas. They are living Bodhisattvas.”

“No kidding?” asked the official.

“I’m the Abbot here. Would I joke with you about a thing like that?”

“Who are they?”

“One is the cook and the other boils the water. One is named Han Shan and the other is named Shih Te. One is a transformation of Manjushri Bodhisattva, and the other is a transformation of Universal Worthy (Samantabhadra) Bodhisattva. They practice ascetic practices in this temple, doing menial tasks. They do the things that no one else likes to do. If you want to see them, it’s quite simple. Just go to the kitchen and you’ll find them there.”

The official asked the Guest Prefect to take him to the kitchen. There they found two grimy, tattered monks with long hair and beards, dirty faces, and a generally disreputable appearance. But the Abbot had said these two were Bodhisattvas, and so he dared not look down on them. Instead, he bowed to them.

“What are you doing?” the two demanded. “Why are you bowing to us?”

“Abbot Feng Kan said you were transformations of Manjushri and Universal Worthy Bodhisattvas, so of course I’m bowing to you.”

“Feng Kan’s flapped his tongue” – by which they meant he was a busybody. “He’s said too much this time.” So, as the official bowed, they backed up and backed up and backed up, one knows not how great a distance – probably several hundred steps from the

kitchen to the rock cliff at the base of the mountain. Then they said, "Feng Kan has flapped his tongue. You didn't even bow to Amitabha. What are you doing bowing to us?"

"Who's Amitabha?" asked the official.

"The Abbot is. He's Amitabha Buddha come again. Go bow to him. Leave us alone."

As the official stood there in amazement, the two grimy monks took one last step backwards and disappeared into the rock cliff. That place is now known as Moonlight Cliff on Tyan Tai Mountain – the spot where Han Shan and Shih Te disappeared.

The official hurried back into Kuo Ch'ing Monastery to bow to the Abbot Feng Kan – Amitabha Buddha. But when he arrived inside, he found that the Abbot had sat down and entered the stillness. He'd entered Nirvana. The official now knew that the Abbot had been Amitabha Buddha come again, but it was too late. He'd failed to see what was right before his eyes. Amitabha Buddha was already gone.

Why don't Buddhas and Bodhisattvas let people know who they are when they come? If everyone knew, everyone would be bowing all day long one after another to the point that it would be pretty annoying. There would be no time left to cultivate. So they don't want to let on who they are.

That's the way it is in Buddhism. One would never say, "Look' I'm enlightened!" "I'm a Buddha!" People like that are no different from the ones being discussed in this section of the Sutra. I've never met anyone who admitted he was enlightened. Neither Elder Master Hsü Yün, nor any of the other enlightened monks in China ever said a word about being enlightened, even if asked directly. There's no such thing in Buddhism, except perhaps in "New Buddhism."

The beings discussed here claim to be superior people. "Do you know who I am? I'm Maitreya Bodhisattva." "Do you know who I am? I'm Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva. Now that you know, you

should not miss out on this opportunity. Bow to me as your teacher. If you don't want to bow to me, you can bow to my teacher. I'll give you a certificate and for sixty-five dollars I'll transmit a Dharma to you." They go about **"Enticing and deceiving the ignorant."** They confuse unsuspecting people. I've met so many people like this. Their line is, "I have dharma treasures. I'll sell you one for only three hundred dollars. It's only because I like you so much that I've saved it for you. If I were not fond of you, I wouldn't offer it to you."

So the disciple gives the teacher three hundred dollars in exchange for a treasure. Some hit you up for a thousand dollars. Soon the old teacher's wallet is fat. When he moves his stash from safe to safe, he has to use a train! Most people fall for this kind of thing. If you speak true dharma for them, such as "Don't kill," they don't believe it. "Don't steal." They don't believe that, either. "Don't be lustful." They don't believe that, either. But if you tell them you've got something that will be to their advantage, they'll pay you for it. **"Or frightening them out of their wits"**: they make you lose whatever wisdom you had. They make you confused. **"They disrupt and lay waste to households wherever they go."** They are really filthy rich, but everywhere they go they keep amassing more wealth, stripping householders of their goods, lock, stock, and barrel

Sutra:

"I teach the bhikshus to beg for their food in an assigned place, in order to help them renounce greed and accomplish the Bodhi Way. The bhikshus do not prepare their own food, so that, at the end of this life of transitory existence in the triple realm, they can show themselves to be once-returners who go and do not come back.

Commentary:

"I teach the bhikshus to beg for their food in an assigned place, in order to help them renounce greed." When it was time to beg for food, each bhikshu headed in a certain direction and

made his rounds in a certain locale. Carrying their bowls, the bhikshus went out to receive alms. Why did the Buddha teach them to beg for food? First, when laypeople give food to people who have left the home-life, they can ensure the reward of blessings and put an end to their suffering and distress. Second, when bhikshus go out for alms, they eat whatever they are given. If it's good, they eat it; if it's bad, they eat it just the same. In this way, they get rid of their greed. If you cook for yourself, you'll think, "What I made today wasn't so good; tomorrow, though, I'll make something delicious. The day after that I'll make something even better, and the day after that I'll make something simply spectacular." There's no end to it. When one goes out begging, there is no chance for selection. One does not make distinctions about which food and drink is good and which is not. One cannot say, "The food I've gotten today is really tasty," and then eat with great gusto. And then the next day, if the food one gets is not good, one does not even eat it. That kind of conduct is impermissible. One eats the good and the bad; general idea is to eat one's fill and forget about it. That gets rid of greed.

"In this way they can accomplish the Bodhi Way." That is because, as it's said:

The superior person is concerned about the Way,
not about food.

People who come to investigate the Buddhadharma should not get hung up on food.

"The bhikshus do not prepare their own food, so that, at the end of this life of transitory existence in the Triple Realm, they can show themselves to be once-returners who go and do not come back." They only want to eat enough sustain their bodies. Our life in this world, whether we dwell on land or in water, is like a stay in a hotel – transitory and soon over. Don't be attached to it. The bhikshus put an end to greed, so that when this life in the Triple Realm is over, they won't have to come back. "This place is filthy.

I'm not going to return here," is their thought. Even America, with its beautiful toilets and magnificent houses – it's enough to have been here once. Don't come back! Don't be greedy for toilets. To begin with, they smell bad; why would you be greedy for them? In fact, this whole world stinks. You should not think it is a clean place. This world is a toilet in itself.

Sutra:

"How can thieves put on my robes and sell the Thus Come One, saying that all manner of karma one creates is just the Buddhadharma? They slander those who have left the home-life and regard bhikshus who have taken complete precepts as belonging to the path of the Small Vehicle. Because of such doubts and misjudgments, limitless living beings fall into the Unintermittent Hell.

Commentary:

"How can thieves put on my robes?" They don the clothes of a left-home person and tell people, "I am a Dharma Master who can lecture on the Sutras. You should all believe in me." **"And** they **sell the Thus Come One."** They barter with the Buddhadharma. They do business with it. All they do is think of ways to get people to give them money. They say **"that all manner of karma one creates is just the Buddhadharma."** They say, "Everything is the Buddhadharma. Dancing is Buddhadharma; drinking wine is Buddhadharma; making music is Buddhadharma. These are all part of the Buddha's eighty-four thousand Dharma-doors." They are really smooth talkers. "Smoking cigarettes is Buddhadharma, gambling is Buddhadharma; you can do anything you want." They are lax, even to the point that no matter what one might do, they say it's all right. **"They slander those who have left the home-life and regard bhikshus who have taken complete precepts as belonging to the path of the Small Vehicle."** If anyone calls them on it and asks, "Have you taken the complete precepts?" they don't even know what you are talking about. They don't even understand the five precepts, how much the less the eight, or the ten, or the ten

major and forty-eight minor precepts. They themselves are not authentic left-home people. Their scope is very small and self-centered. **“Because of such doubts and misjudgments limitless living beings fall into the Unintermittent Hell.”** They cause others to be confused, and they themselves basically do not understand. To begin with, the people who follow them had good intentions, but having become involved with such a messed-up teacher, they end up in the same situation as was mentioned earlier:

If one who is dazed
transmits the delusion to another,
When all is said and done,
neither one understands.
The teacher falls into the hells,
And the disciples burrow in after him

In the Unintermittent Hell there is no break in the suffering. One person fills the hell in the same way that many people fill it. With just one person in that hell, there would still be no space left over. And no matter how many people are in it, it’s always just as full. One can never get out of this hell. So it’s very dangerous to set up conditions for it.

Q2 Teaching people to cut off stealing is the Buddha’s instruction.
R1 First he offers his own instructions.

Sutra:

“I say that bhikshus who after my extinction have decisive resolve to cultivate samadhi, and who before the images of Thus Come Ones can burn a candle on their bodies, or burn off a finger, or burn even one incense stick on their bodies, will, in that moment, repay their debts from beginningless time past. They can depart from the world and forever be free of outflows. Though they may not have instantly understood the Unsurpassed Enlightenment, they will already have firmly set their mind on it.

Commentary:

"I say that bhikshus who after my extinction have decisive resolve to cultivate samadhi, and who before the images of Thus Come Ones can burn a candle on their bodies, or burn off a finger, or burn even one incense stick on their bodies, will, in that moment, repay their debts from beginningless time past." These bhikshus, under proper guidance, at the appropriate time, and in the prescribed manner, cut out a piece of their flesh with a knife and place some oil in the hole. Then they light the oil and are a living lamp for the Buddha. Or perhaps they burn off a finger in the correct manner; or they let one or two or three pieces of incense burn on their bodies, such as on their arm. Shakyamuni Buddha says that all the debts such people have accumulated throughout time without beginning can be wiped away in that single act. **"They can depart from the world and forever be free of outflows. Though they may not have instantly understood the unsurpassed enlightenment, they will already have firmly set their mind on it."** They will have a decisive resolve and will not retreat from it.

Sutra:

"If one does not practice any of these token renunciations of the body on the causal level, then even if one realizes the unconditioned, one will still have to come back as a person to repay one's past debts exactly as I had to undergo the retribution of having to eat the grain meant for horses.

Commentary:

"If one does not practice any of these token renunciations of the body on the causal level, then even if one realizes the unconditioned, one will still have to come back as a person to repay one's past debts." If one doesn't do any of these acts of physical renunciation, such as making a lamp on one's body or burning off a finger or making incense burns on the body, thus planting a few good causes, then even if one accomplishes the Way, even if one becomes enlightened, even if one becomes a Buddha, one will still

have debts to pay back. One will have to come back as a person again and repay one's debts from past lives, **"exactly as I had to undergo the retribution of having to eat the grain meant for horses."** I had to eat grain meant for horse-feed for ninety days this life," Shakyamuni Buddha says.

Why did Shakyamuni Buddha have to undergo that retribution? It had to do with a past life, when he was a Brahman engaged in teaching five hundred pure youths how to cultivate the Way. At that time, there was another Buddha in the world. One day, when that Buddha went on the begging rounds with the bhikshus, he instructed them to have the donors put a little extra in their bowls to accommodate a bhikshu who was sick and could not go on the alms-rounds. As they returned from their rounds, they passed by the mountain where the Brahman who was Shakyamuni Buddha on the cause-ground dwelt. When the Brahman got a whiff of the food from their especially full bowls, he became jealous. "Why do those bald monks get to eat so well? They should only be allowed horse-feed." His five-hundred disciples all agreed with him, of course, chiming in, "Right! They are only fit to eat horse-feed." After he became a Buddha, Shakyamuni took five hundred disciples to a certain country to spend the summer retreat. On the surface, the King of the country gave them a cordial welcome, but after he allowed them into the country, the King would not make offerings to these monks. Eventually a horse-trainer in the country became aware that the Buddha and bhikshus were not being given any offerings of food, so he shared with the monks the grain that he fed his horses. Even though the Brahman had eventually become Shakyamuni Buddha, and his five hundred pure youths were now five hundred Arhats and had been certified to the fruition, they still had to repay he debt from that past life: for ninety days they had to eat horse-feed.

So, the Buddha says that if one does not perform these acts of bodily renunciation, one will still in the future have to repay the debts one has incurred in past lives, just as he did.

R2 Then he explains it is the teaching of all former Buddhas.

Sutra:

“When you teach people in the world to cultivate samadhi, they must also cease stealing. This is the third clear and unalterable instruction on purity given by the Thus Come One and the Buddhas of the past, World Honored Ones.

Commentary:

“When you teach people in the world to cultivate samadhi they must also cease stealing.” Since they want to cultivate, they must get rid of their thoughts of stealing. **“This is the third clear and unalterable instruction on purity given by the Thus Come One and the Buddhas of the past, World Honored Ones.”** This is an unchanging instruction given by Shakyamuni Buddha and by all Buddhas of the past.

P3 He decides if samadhi can be obtained.
Q1 An analogy makes clear that if stealing is not cut off, samadhi is hard to obtain.

Sutra:

“Therefore, Ananda, if cultivators of Ch’an samadhi do not cease stealing, they are like someone who pours water into a leaking cup and hopes to fill it. He may continue for as many aeons as there are fine motes of dust, but it still will not be full in the end.

Commentary:

“Therefore, Ananda, if cultivators of Ch’an samadhi do not cease stealing, they are like someone who pours water into a leaking cup and hopes to fill it. If you are trying to fill a cup with a hole in it, you **may continue for as many aeons as there are fine motes of dust, but it still will not be full in the end.”**

Q2 Diligent and profound cutting off of stealing can bring samadhi.

Sutra:

"If bhikshus do not store away anything but their robes and bowls; if they give what is left over from their food-offerings to hungry living beings; if they put their palms together and make obeisance to the entire great assembly; if when people scold them they can treat it as praise: if they can sacrifice their very bodies and minds, giving their flesh, bones, and blood to living creatures; and if they do not repeat the non-ultimate teachings of the Thus Come One as though they were their own explanations, misrepresenting them to those who have just begun to study, then the Buddha gives them his seal as having attained true samadhi.

Commentary:

"If bhikshus do not store away anything but their robes and bowls": Bhikshus should have three robes, a bowl, and sitting cloth. They don't need anything else. They do not accumulate possessions. **"If they give what is left over from their food-offerings to hungry living beings"**: They give alms that they cannot eat to living beings who have nothing to eat. **"If they put their palms together and make obeisance to the entire great assembly"**: They place their palms together and are respectful to any gathering of people. **"If when people scold them they can treat it as praise"**: regard scolding as being the same as praise, they do not react to the scolding. **"If they can sacrifice their very bodies and minds, giving their flesh, bones, and blood to living creatures"**: Their minds harbor no arrogant thoughts and their bodies do not act in ways that display pride and self-satisfaction. When someone scolds you, you should act as if he is singing a song for you. If you yourself do not scold people and yet someone scolds you, you shouldn't even understand what he is saying. It shouldn't even make sense to you. It should be as if he is speaking some language you don't understand, such as Japanese, English, or Chinese, depending on which one you don't know. When someone

is clearly scolding you, you just think, “Oh, he is saying such nice things about me.” Look at it in the reverse. If someone hits you, just pretend you bumped into a wall. Suppose you were careless and ran smack into a wall and were left with a big lump on your head. If you then turned around and socked the wall with your fist, saying, “Why did bump into me?” you’d only end up with a hurt hand to boot. When someone strikes you, if you view it as if you’d bumped into a wall, the whole affair will end right there.

True bhikshus who have brought forth the resolve for Bodhi should even give up their flesh and blood to other beings if there are some who want to partake of it. Once when Shakyamuni Buddha was on the cause-ground, he saw a starving tiger, and he gave up his body for the tiger to eat. The tiger is one of the world’s most ferocious beasts, and yet the Buddha on the cause-ground could give up his own body to the tiger.

“If they do not repeat the non-ultimate teachings of the Thus Come One as though they were their own explanations, misrepresenting them to those who have just begun to study”: They will not discuss the teachings of the Small Vehicle in such a way that they appear to be their own explanations. In other words, they won’t plagiarize the Buddha, thereby misrepresenting themselves and confusing people who have first begun to study. If they do not do any of these things, **“Then the Buddha gives them his seal as having attained true samadhi.”** The Buddha will give the seal of certification to people like this. They have genuine samadhi power.

Sutra:

“What I have said here is the Buddhas’ teaching. Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of Papiyan.

Commentary:

This explanation is the way the Buddhas speak Dharma. Any other explanation is the dharma spoken by the kings of demons.

One Must Cut Off False Speech

N4 One must cut off false speech.
O1 He discusses the intent of precepts or provisional dharmas.
P1 False speech is very harmful.
Q1 Traces false speech as a reason for becoming demonic.

Sutra:

"Ananda, though living beings in the six paths of any mundane world may not kill, steal, or lust either physically or mentally, these three aspects of their conduct thus being perfect. Yet if they tell lies, the samadhi they attain will not be pure. They will become demons of love and views and will lose the seed of the Thus Come One.

Commentary:

"Ananda, though living beings in the six paths of any mundane world may not kill, steal, or lust either physically or mentally": with their bodies they do not commit acts of killing, stealing, or lust. In their minds there are no thoughts of killing, stealing, or lust, **"these three aspects of their conduct thus being perfect, yet if they tell lies, the samadhi they attain will not be pure."** This means it is a habit with them: they are always telling big lies. Since they are not pure, **"they will become demons of love and views and will lose the seed of the Thus Come One."** They will become demons of love or demons of views. Why do they lose the seed of the Tathagata? It is because they lie excessively.

Q2 Points out the motives of false speech.

Sutra:

"They say that they have attained what they have not attained, and that they have been certified when they have not been certified. Perhaps they seek to be foremost in the world, the most venerated and superior person. To their audiences they say that they have attained the fruition of a Shrotaapanna, the fruition of a Sakridagamin, the fruition of an Anagamin, the fruition of Arhatship, the Pratyekabuddha vehicle, or the various levels of Bodhisattvahood up to and including the Ten Grounds. In order to be revered by others and because they are greedy for offerings.

Commentary:

What kind of lies do they tell? Ordinary lies aside, **"They say that they have attained what they have not attained."** They have not attained the Way. Basically, they don't understand the least thing about cultivating. They don't know how to recite the Buddha's name; they don't know how to hold precepts; they don't know how to sit in Ch'an. They act like they know, but they don't. They hear someone explain some principle, and they interrupt with, "I understand that. I already knew that a long time ago." Or they say, "Hey, I've already got the Way. I'm enlightened. I'm a Buddha." They say "**that they hove been certified when they have not been certified."** They have not reached the first stage of Arhatship, much less do they have an understanding of the levels above that, but they say, "Do you know what I am? I'm an Arhat." Or, "I'm a Buddha." Or, "I'm a Bodhisattva." Why do they say these things? **"Perhaps they seek to be foremost in the world, the most venerated and superior person."** It's as someone said recently to one of my disciples: "What sect are you? We're in this together. We should join ranks, and I'll be the leader. I'm the founder of American Buddhism. I'm the First Patriarch of American Buddhism." That's "seeking to be number one." **"To their audiences they say that they have attained the fruition of**

a Shrotaapanna, the fruition of a Sakridagamin, the fruition of an Anagamin, the fruition of Arhatship.” They start out telling those around them that they are first-stage Arhats. But soon that level is not lofty enough, so they say, “Oh, I just certified to the second fruition of Arhatship’” And then a second later they claim fruition to the fourth level. Still, fourth fruition is just Arhatship and not the highest position, so they are not satisfied. They claim to have **“the Pratyekabuddha Vehicle, of the various levels of Bodhisattvahood up to and including the Ten Grounds.”** They start telling people they are PratyekaBuddhas, or they claim to be at any one of the stages of Bodhisattva practice, even the Ten Grounds!

Why do such people claim to be Arhats, PratyekaBuddhas, and Bodhisattvas? What it amounts to is that they are cheating people and telling big lies in order to get people to believe in them. If no one believes in them, they don’t have an income. As soon as people believe, then the offerings start to pour in. And so intent are they **“to be revered by others,** so **greedy** are they **for their offerings,** that they do not fear falling into the hell of pulling out tongues. If one is a liar, after one’s death, one goes to this hell where an iron hook sinks into one’s tongue, pulls it out, and a sword chops it off. That’s the retribution for lying. And yet there are still people who dare to do it. We don’t even have to look beyond this world: just take mutes, for instance. Why are they mute? They are undergoing a retribution for excessive lying. They get to be people, but they can’t talk. “See how much lying you can do now’” is the message. Why can’t they talk? They have had their tongues cut out. Although they have tongues, the essence in them is gone; their tongues have no nature.

Why are some people blind? It is because they looked down on other people. They always considered themselves to be better than everyone else. They were smarter and more talented in every way, and so in this life they can’t see people. Now they must ask themselves whether they are really better than everyone else. The deaf also are undergoing a retribution for having eavesdropped on

conversations. They used to put their ear to numerous keyholes to find out what was being said. Present-day spies with their myriad ways of overhearing people, of stealing private conversations, may well have to bear the same retribution and be deaf at some future point in time.

However, if once you understand the principle, you then refrain from lying, you can avoid being mute. If you no longer look down on people, you won't have to be blind. If you don't steal other's conversations, you won't have to be deaf. Being mute, hunchback, and blind are all retributions for having slandered the Triple Jewel.

Q3 Predicts the fall of those who harm the good.

Sutra:

"These icchantikas destroy the seeds of Buddhahood just as surely as a tala tree is destroyed if it is chopped down. The Buddha predicts that such people sever their good roots forever and lose their knowledge and vision. Immersed in the sea of the Three Sufferings, they cannot attain samadhi.

Commentary:

"These icchantikas destroy the seeds of Buddhahood." People who tell big lies, who say they have attained what they in fact have not attained, who say they have been certified to what they have not been certified to, and who say they understand things they do not understand – such people are "icchantikas," which means "those who have cut off their good roots." If you cut off your good roots, then of course your bad roots will multiply. People who tell big lies and cheat people in the world ruin their own Buddha seed, **"just as surely as a tala tree is destroyed if it is chopped down."** The tala tree, found in India, grows to great heights, but if it is chopped down, it will not grow again. These people sever their Buddha seed in the same way one might cut down a tala tree; neither will grow again. **"The Buddha predicts that such people sever their good roots forever and lose their knowledge and vision."** The Buddha's prediction for such people is that they ruin

their own good roots and become bereft of any sense or insight. **“Immersed in the sea of the Three Sufferings, they cannot attain samadhi.”** The Three Sufferings referred to here are:

1. the suffering of knives, which refers to the hell of the mountain of knives,
2. the suffering of blood, which refers to the hell of bleeding, where one’s entire body keeps bleeding and bleeding,
3. the suffering of fire, which refers to the hell of burning by fire.

These people fall into these three terrible hells.

P2 He shows that he has clearly instructed against false speech.
Q1 The Buddha instructs that holy transformations must be secret.

Sutra:

“I command the Bodhisattvas and Arhats to appear after my extinction in response-bodies in the Dharma-ending Age, and to take various forms in order to rescue those in the cycle of rebirth.

Commentary:

“I command the Bodhisattvas and Arhats to appear after my extinction in response-bodies in the Dharma-ending Age.” They should use response bodies and transformation bodies to be born in this world where there is so much suffering and distress. During the Dharma-ending Age, they will take various forms, they will appear in various ways – perhaps as human beings, perhaps as animals, or in any one of a manner of forms. They will constantly accord with living beings **“in order to rescue those in the cycle of rebirth.”** They will universally save living beings. Bodhisattvas come back as animals as well. You shouldn’t think that it is disrespectful to say so, because they really do. In their practice of the Bodhisattva Way, they will go and teach animals, as when Shakyamuni Buddha in a past life was a deer king and rescued the deer.

Sutra:

"They should either become Shramanas, white-robed laypeople, kings, ministers or officials, virgin youths or maidens, and so forth, even prostitutes, widows, profligates, thieves, butchers, or dealers in contraband, doing the same things as these kinds of people while they praise the Buddha vehicle and cause them to enter samadhi in body and mind.

Commentary:

These Bodhisattvas and Arhats make transformation bodies and "**become Shramanas**, people who have left the homelife, either fully ordained or novices. Or they become **white-robed laypeople.**" Laypeople do not leave the homelife, and they were referred to as "the white-robed" in India. They protect and uphold the Triple Jewel. This is because left-home people

Do not plow, but must eat,
Do not sew, but must wear clothes.

So it is necessary for the laypeople to make offerings to them. "Or the Bodhisattvas become **kings** in the human realm, or **ministers or officials.** Or they become **virgin youths or maidens, and so forth, even prostitutes, widows.** Or they become **profligates, thieves, butchers, or dealers in contraband** They even become people who force themselves on women, or who steal things, or kill animals, or deal in things like opium. The Bodhisattvas and Arhats do **the same things as these kinds of people.**" Why do they turn into people like those? It is because they want to convert those kinds of people. In order to do this, they must use the Four Dharmas of Attraction:

1. giving;
2. kind words;
3. beneficial practice;
4. similar work

First, they attract them by giving. There are three kinds of giving:

1. The giving of wealth;
2. the giving of Dharma;
3. the giving of fearlessness.

If one has money, one gives it. If one knows the Dharma, one speaks it for others, thereby giving. If someone is frightened or upset, one can protect them and comfort them, thereby dispelling their fears; that is the giving of fearlessness. But, in giving in these various ways, one should not be greedy and expect repayment of some kind. You should not think, “Ah, now I am giving in this way, and in the future I will gain various advantages.” Do it and forget it. Let it go. Then “the substance of the three aspects is empty.” The three aspects are the giver, the gift, and the receiver. You should practice giving with the attitude that it is something you should do, rather than that you are amassing all kinds of merit and virtue.

The giving of Dharma is the same way. When you speak Dharma for others, you should not be thinking, “My merit and virtue from speaking the Dharma is no doubt tremendous: you should all make offerings to me.” The same is true of the giving of fearlessness. In general, when you give, you should not be reflecting upon how much benefit there is in it for you. Nor should you only be willing to give when you think it will be advantageous for you, while refusing to give when it won’t.

Second, they attract them with kind words. For instance, the Buddha says to Ananda, “Good indeed, good indeed,’ and in the same way the Bodhisattvas praise beings, saying, You are really a good boy’ You are so intelligent You really have good roots.”

Third, they attract them with beneficial practices. This means doing things to help others, not to help your

Fourth, they attract them through similar work. That’s, whatever beings do, they do. Perhaps a Bodhisattva wants to save a prostitute who has good roots that have come to maturity; Matangi’s daughter, mentioned in this Sutra, is an example. Matangi’s daughter was a prostitute, but her time was right, and so

when Ananda returned to the Jeta Grove, she followed along. As soon as the Buddha spoke Dharma for her, she was certified as having attained the third fruition of Arhatship. Eventually she attained the fourth fruition. And she was a prostitute to start with' So, in order to save prostitutes, Bodhisattvas may transform into prostitutes themselves, because if they are engaged in the same profession and are friends, what they say will be trusted by those they wish to save. For instance, a university student may say, I believe in the Buddhadharma; it's wonderful. I'm going to investigate such and such a sutra right now." The students he is talking to say, "We'd like to go, too. We'd also like to look into that sutra." So everyone comes to investigate the *Shurangama Sutra*. It's the same principle.

Therefore, you never know who might be a Bodhisattva or an Arhat. But, if you are one, don't tell anyone. You don't want to go around saying, "I'm a Bodhisattva. You should listen to what I have to say." Why can't you do that? Because the Buddha forbade it.

So the Bodhisattvas and Arhats do the same things as these kinds of people, but while doing it **"they praise the Buddha vehicle and cause them to enter samadhi in body and mind."** They may indulge in the same activities, but they speak the Buddhadharma at every chance they get. "The Buddhadharma is so fine! It's beyond compare." And in this way, they cause those who listen to be enticed, just as if they were eating candy.

That reminds me of an historical record. In the past, in China, there lived a monk named Tu Hsun. He would sometimes lecture Sutras and speak Dharma. He also taught people how to sit and investigate Ch'an. Sometimes he taught people to be mindful of the Buddha. He used all kinds of methods to teach and transform living beings. He had a disciple who left the home-life under him and followed him for more than ten years. Every day, the disciple was very attentive to the teacher's conduct and activities. He kept trying to figure out what his teacher was: that is, was he a Bodhisattva, or an Arhat, or perhaps a Buddha? Finally, after ten years, he came to

the conclusion that his teacher, Dharma Master Tu Hsun, was absolutely ordinary, that there was nothing unusual about him. The teacher ate, as did other people. The teacher wore clothes, as did other people. The teacher slept, as did other people. He wasn't any different from anyone else. So the disciple decided he probably wasn't a Buddha or a Bodhisattva, or an Arhat. With that, he went to his teacher to bow out. He decided to leave. What were his plans? He was going to Wu T'ai Mountain to bow to Manjushri Bodhisattva. He intended to seek wisdom from Manjushri Bodhisattva with the hope of becoming enlightened. "Teacher," he said, "I've studied here for more than ten years, and I don't feel I've learned anything. I don't understand anything, and I'm really stupid, so I've decided to go bow to Manjushri Bodhisattva in the hope that I can realize some wisdom."

"Fine," said his teacher. "You want to go climb that mountain, so be it. Be on your way. But I have two letters I'd like you to take along for me and deliver on your way." One letter was for Old Mother Pig. The other letter was for Madam Green. When the disciple reached the address that was written on Madam Green's letter, she turned out to be a prostitute. The disciple was getting suspicious. "What's my teacher doing writing letters to a prostitute?" he wondered. "Is she his lover, and he's having me be the go-between?" But he delivered the letter saying, "My teacher, Tu Hsun, sent you a letter." Madam Green took the letter, read it, sat down, and said, "Good' He's leaving. I'm leaving, too." Then she died on the spot. She entered Nirvana. The disciple found the whole event quite strange, and so he took the letter and read it. Then he found out that Madam Green was really Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva, for the letter said, "Gwan Yin, I've finished my business here and am going. You should come with me."

The disciple sighed with regret. "If I had known that was Gwan Yin Bodhisattva, I would have knelt before her, and until she'd entered Nirvana I would have never gotten up, so I could have sought for wisdom and enlightenment. That would have been great,

but now I've missed the opportunity." That's just exactly what's meant by the saying:

> *Face to face with her,*
> *one fails to recognize Gwan Shr Yin'*

He took up the other letter and headed for Old Mother Pig's place. But when he got to the address, no one had heard of her. As he was passing a pigsty, an old sow spoke to him. "Why are you looking for Old Mother Pig?"

The disciple was astonished and wondered what kind of freak he'd encountered. Impulsively he replied, "My teacher told me to deliver a letter to Old Mother Pig."

"Oh," said the sow. "Well, I'm Old Mother Pig. You can give me the letter." The sow took the letter and looked at it, though it was hard to know whether she could understand what it said. Nonetheless, when she finished looking at it, she sat down and said, "Oh, his business is finished; I'll go back, too," and she died.

When the disciple looked at the letter, it showed the old pig was a transformation body of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva. "Is it really possible that Universal Worthy was that pig?" he wondered, still plagued with doubts. And he didn't have any idea what business it was that his teacher had finished.

He went on to Wu T'ai Mountain, and there he saw a very old monk, who asked him, "What are you doing here?"

"I came to bow to the greatly wise Manjushri Bodhisattva and to seek for wisdom and enlightenment."

"Ugh, you!" said the old monk. "You've come to bow to Manjushri Bodhisattva, but bowing to your own teacher is ten thousand times better."

"Why?" asked the disciple.

"Your teacher, the Venerable Tu Hsun, is Amitabha Buddha appearing in the world again. He's come to roam and play in the human realm to teach and transform living beings. You've been his

disciple for more than ten years. How come you've never figured that out?"

"Oh? My teacher is Amitabha Buddha!" said the disciple. "He doesn't look like him!" And when he looked again, the old monk was gone. Then he saw a note there which said, "Manjushri Bodhisattva instructs you to immediately return to your teacher Tu Shun, who is Amitabha Buddha."

Finally, the disciple believed it. He had met Manjushri Bodhisattva in the flesh and been told to go back to his own teacher. So he rushed back only to find that the monk, Tu Hsun, had entered the stillness days before. Once again, he'd missed his chance. He'd been the disciple of Amitabha Buddha for a decade and never realized it. He renounced what was at hand to seek what was afar, only to find that he should return to his own teacher. Now who was there left to see?

Sutra:

"But they should never say of themselves, 'I am truly a Bodhisattva'; or 'I am truly an Arhat,' or let the Buddha's secret cause leak out by speaking casually to those who have not yet studied.

Commentary:

"But they should never say of themselves, 'I am truly a Bodhisattva.'" They might be Bodhisattvas, Arhats, or Buddhas who have come to this world. But even if it were Shakyamuni Buddha himself come again to this world, or Amitabha Buddha, or Medicine Master Buddha Who Dispels Calamities and Lengthens Life, or Production of Jewels Buddha, or Accomplishment Buddha, or any other Buddha, or any Bodhisattva or Arhat, not one would ever say, "I'm really a Bodhisattva. It's true, and you should believe me. I'm truly a Bodhisattva'" One cannot speak like that.

"If they say, '**I am truly an Arhat.'** Do you recognize me? Do you realize who I am? I'm an Arhat'"' then you know they are part of the retinue of the demon kings. If someone praises you by saying

that you are a Bodhisattva or an Arhat, you should not admit it even if you are. You cannot let it out. You cannot "**let the Buddha's secret cause leak out.** You should not reveal the secret cause of the Buddha **by speaking casually to those who have not yet studied.**" You can't just nonchalantly reveal your origin. What is acceptable, then? You can reveal it when you are about to die, don't do it before you are ready to go.

When you reveal it,
then don't stay.
As long as you are staying,
don't reveal it.

As soon as you reveal your origins, for example, that you are a transformation body of such and such a Bodhisattva, then you should leave immediately. As long as the word is not out, you can stay here, but as soon as you let it be known, you'll wind up with a lot of trouble on your hands if you don't go.

Q2 Only at the end of their life is there a transmission.

Sutra:

"How can people who make such claims, other than at the end of their lives and then only to those who inherit the teaching, be doing anything but deluding and confusing living beings and indulging in a gross false claim?

Commentary:

"How can people who make such claims, other than at the end of their lives and then only to those who inherit the teaching, be doing anything but deluding and confusing living beings?" If you are a holy being, then at the end of your life you can tell people so. But even then you can't tell everyone. You reveal it to those closest to you, perhaps a room-entering disciple or two. People who do otherwise simply delude and confuse beings by **"indulging in a gross false claim?"** If you have not attained the

Way, and you claim you have, if you have not been certified to the fruition, and you say that you have, you are telling a huge lie.

During the Ch'ing Dynasty in China lived the high monk Elder Master Yin Kuang. The Master was from Shan Hsi. After he left the home-life, he made a pilgrimage to P'u T'ou Mountain, the Bodhimanda of Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva. He went into seclusion there. He locked himself in a room and read the Tripitaka. If one reads every day, it takes about three years to finish reading the Tripitaka. He repeated this three-year cycle of reading the Tripitaka over and over for eighteen years. During all those years, he never left the mountain. At the end of that period, a group of laypeople in Shanghai invited him to lecture on the *Amitabha Sutra*. He agreed, but not too many people came to the lecture series, perhaps because it was difficult for them to understand his Shanghai dialect.

But among those who did come was a high school student from Shanghai who had had a dream in which she was told to go listen to the Sutra. The dream said: "You should go to such and such a lay community and listen to the *Amitabha Sutra* being lectured there by Great Strength Bodhisattva." The next night, the student read in the newspaper that Dharma Master Yin Kuang was lecturing the *Amitabha Sutra* at that very place. "Why did my dream tell me that Dharma Master Yin Kuang is Great Strength Bodhisattva?" she wondered.

That night, she attended the lecture, and after everyone had left she related her dream to the Elder Dharma Master. When she concluded that he must be Great Strength Bodhisattva, Dharma Master Yin Kuang was very displeased, and he warned her, "You cannot go around talking such nonsense!" So she never talked about the dream, but she took refuge with the Elder Dharma Master. Three years later the Master entered the stillness, and it was only then that she told about her dream. Everyone was upset that she had not told them sooner, so that they could have requested more Dharma from the Elder Master. But she told them she had been forbidden to speak of it by the Master himself. From this incident it

is clear that Elder Master Yin Kuang was, in fact, a transformation of Great Strength Bodhisattva. When he was cremated, there were many sharira.

So, when one's life is about to end, some hints can be given. But still, one can't speak openly about such things. Perhaps in a dream, as in this case, a little indication can be made. But one cannot state anything flatly like, "I am Great Strength Bodhisattva." That's not the way it's done.

People these days go around claiming to be Buddhas. This is in direct opposition to the teachings of the *Shurangama Sutra*. Of course, all living beings are Buddhas, but you have to cultivate to become a Buddha. If you don't cultivate, you're more likely to be a horse, cow, pig, sheep, or chicken. You're likely to become a hungry ghost or fall into the hells; nothing is for certain.

P3 The clear instruction transmitted from former Buddhas.

Sutra:

"When you teach people in the world to cultivate samadhi, they must also cease all lying. This is the fourth clear and unalterable instruction on purity given by the Thus Come Ones and the Buddhas of the past, World Honored Ones.

Commentary:

"Ananda, do you hear this? **When you teach people in the world to cultivate samadhi, they must also cease all lying.**" This means all kinds of exaggerations and boasts. For goodness sake, don't say, "I'm enlightened," or "I've been certified to the fruition," or "I'm a Buddha," or "I'm a Bodhisattva," or "I'm an Arhat." That's just too cheap. **"This is the fourth clear and unalterable instruction on purity given by the Thus Come Ones and the Buddhas of the past, World Honored Ones."** Don't teach others to lie and make false claims. This instruction is given by all Buddhas of the present and all Buddhas of the past.

P4 Deciding if Bodhi can be obtained.
Q1 An analogy shows that if one does not cut off false speech, it is difficult to obtain Bodhi.

Sutra:

“Therefore, Ananda, one who does not cut off lying is like a person who carves a piece of human excrement to look like chandana, hoping to make it fragrant. He is attempting the impossible.

Commentary:

“I’ll give you an example. **Therefore, Ananda, one who does not cut off lying is like a person who carves a piece of human excrement to look like chandana, hoping to make it fragrant.**” Someone who hopes to become pure without cutting off lying is like a person who tries to make a piece of incense out of a piece of shit. **“He is attempting the impossible.”** He’ll never get the excrement to smell like chandana incense. This means if you lie, it’s as if you smell bad. If you cultivate Ch’an samadhi trying to become a Buddha and yet you continue to lie, you are just like a piece of excrement. For a liar to try and become a Buddha is like trying to get a piece of shit to be a sweet-smelling Buddha image. That’s beyond reason.

Sutra:

“I teach the bhikshus that the straight mind is the Bodhimanda and that they should practice the four awesome deportments in all their activities. Since they should be devoid of all falseness, how can they claim to have themselves attained the Dharmas of a superior person?

Commentary:

“I teach the bhikshus that the straight mind is the Bodhimanda.” Here the reference to “bhikshus” includes all four assemblies. You can’t say at this point, “I’m a layperson, and so the Buddha isn’t referring to me.” You have to be straight in what you

think and say. Don't be roundabout. Don't be deceptive. Not having a straight mind is also like trying to get incense out of excrement.

"I tell them **that they should practice the four awesome deportments in all their activities.**" These were discussed in detail earlier. There are 250 aspects to each of the deportments of standing, sitting, walking, and lying down. You should always do things truly, and actually cultivate. **"Since they should be devoid of all falseness, how can they claim to have themselves attained the Dharmas of a superior person?"** How can one say of oneself that one has been certified to the fruition of a Bodhisattva or of an Arhat? One may not speak that way. Before one has heard the sutras, one may be quite casual in what one says. But, now that you have heard this sutra, you know that you cannot say you have attained certain levels of fruition. To do so is to speak a great lie. The retribution for it is to fall into the Hell of Pulling Out Tongues. In the future, your tongue will be hooked with an iron hook and pulled out by the root. Afterwards you will have no opportunity to lie, for in the future, you will be mute.

Sutra:

"That would be like a poor person falsely calling himself an emperor; for that, he would be taken and executed. Much less should one attempt to usurp the title of Dharma King. When the cause-ground is not true, the effects will be distorted. One who seeks the Buddha's Bodhi in this way is like a person who tries to bite his own navel. Who could possibly succeed?

Commentary:

"**That would be like a poor person falsely calling himself an emperor.** 'Did you realize,' he would say, 'that I am the ruler of this land?' **For** saying **that, he would be taken and executed.**" The emperor would immediately have him arrested, and his whole family would be wiped out. All his friends and relatives would die in the process. Then where would the "emperor" have gone? To claim that you have attained the fruition when you have not is to be like a poor person who calls himself emperor. He'll be

exterminated for it. And if one can't casually call oneself emperor on the worldly plane, **"much less should one attempt to usurp the title of Dharma King.** How could one try to usurp the position of Buddhahood? **When the cause-ground is not true, the effects will be distorted."** On the cause-ground, when you are cultivating the Way, if you do not cultivate truly, the effects you reap in the future will be crooked. There will be a lot of wrinkles. You will not be able to accomplish the fruition directly. If you cultivate in this way, you may do so for countless great aeons, but you will still be unsuccessful. "**One who seeks the Buddha's Bodhi in this way is like a person who tries to bite his own navel.** If you conduct yourself in this fashion – continually indulging in lies and boasts and yet are seeking the Bodhi of the Buddhas, you are like a person trying to bite his own navel. **Who could possibly succeed?**" You could never bite your own navel, because your mouth won't reach it.

Q2 He promises if one can cut off false speech, one will certainly accomplish Bodhi.

Sutra:

"If bhikshus' minds are as straight as lute strings, true and real in everything they do, then they can enter samadhi and never be involved in the deeds of demons. I certify that such people will accomplish the Bodhisattvas' Unsurpassed Knowledge and Enlightenment.

Commentary:

"If bhikshus' and laypeoples' **minds are as straight as lute strings, true and real in everything they do, then they can enter samadhi and never be involved in the deeds of demons."** One's mind should be straight like a lute-string, not curved and crooked like the body of the lute. One should be truthful in all matters and never lie. Lying is a case of,

Being off by a hair in the beginning,
One will be off by a thousand miles in the end.

If you tell one lie now, it sets back your accomplishment of Buddhahood by several million great aeons. Take a good look and see who's taking the loss.

If one can be straight and truthful, one can enter samadhi, and no demonic obstacles will ever arise. **"I certify that such people will accomplish the Bodhisattvas' Unsurpassed Knowledge and Enlightenment."** Anyone who has a mind as straight and true as a lute-string can become a Bodhisattva. They can accomplish the unsurpassed wisdom and enlightenment of a Bodhisattva.

O2 He speaks of the division into deviant and proper.

Sutra:

"What I have said here is the Buddha's teaching. Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of Papiyan.

Commentary:

"What I have said here is the Buddha's teaching. If you explain as I have explained here, it will be the doctrine spoken by the Buddhas. **Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of Papiyan."** Anyone who does not express this doctrine, but pronounces theories that oppose it, is just a demon-king talking." "Papiyan" refers to the Demon King.

M3 General conclusion: stay distant from demons.

Sutra:

"Ananda, you asked about collecting one's thoughts; I have now begun to explain the wonderful method of cultivation for entrance into samadhi. Those who seek the Bodhisattva Way must first be as pure as glistening frost in keeping these four rules of deportment. If one is able to never give rise to anything superfluous, then the three evils of the mind and the four of the mouth will have no cause to come forth.

Commentary:

"Ananda, you asked about collecting one's thoughts; I have now begun to explain the wonderful method of cultivation for entrance into samadhi." The "wonderful method" is the perfect penetration of the organ of the ear, the returning of the hearing to hear the self-nature, so that one's nature accomplishes the unsurpassed Way. **"Those who seek the Bodhisattva Way must first be as pure as glistening frost in keeping these four rules of deportment."** The first thing you must do is cultivate these four rules of deportment; not taking life, not stealing, not committing acts of sexual misconduct, and not lying. The prohibition against sexual misconduct refers not only to lust with the body, but to lust within the mind. You must get rid of both in order to transcend the wearisome dust. If you don't get rid of your thoughts of lust, you cannot get out of the dust. The same goes for killing, stealing, and lying. These four rules of deportment are extremely important. You should become as glistening white as frost. You should be completely white, without the least bit of defilement – with not one black fleck in the white. If one can be like that, then quite naturally, **"one is able to never give rise to anything superfluous."** Spontaneously, you will attain the source. **"Then the three evils of the mind and the four of the mouth will have no cause to come forth."** The greed, hatred, and stupidity born of the mind will cease to arise. And the four mistakes of the mouth – loose speech, harsh speech, lies, and gossip will not arise. There will be no causes and conditions to allow them to arise, because you hold the precepts and truly cultivate the four clear and unalterable instructions on purity.

Sutra:

"Ananda, if one does not neglect these four matters, and, further, if one does not pursue forms, fragrances, tastes, or objects of touch, then how can any demonic deeds arise?

Commentary:

"**Ananda, if one does not neglect these four matters,** if one does not lose sight of or forget about these four clear and fixed

instructions on purity regarding killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, **and, further, if one does not pursue forms, fragrances, tastes, or objects of touch, then how can any demonic deeds arise?** If you don't get caught up in the defiling states of forms, sounds, smells, and objects of touch, if you don't climb on these conditions, then demonic deeds will spontaneously disappear. Once they are gone, they cannot arise.

L2 Aided by the power of the mantra.
M1 Supreme praise for diligently holding it.

Sutra:

"If there are people who cannot put an end to their habits from the past, you should teach them to single-mindedly recite my 'light atop the Buddha's summit' unsurpassed spiritual mantra, mwo he sa dan dwo bwo da la.

Commentary:

If there are living beings who cannot get rid of their bad habits from past lives, you should teach them to recite single-mindedly. The important point here is to be single-minded. Don't have a divided mind such that on the one hand you recite the mantra, but on other you doubt its function. You don't want to be reciting and thinking, "Namo, Namo, Namo what?" You recite the mantra on the one hand, and on the other you don't really want to be saying "Namo," at the same time that you are saying it. That's just a case of being caught between belief and doubt. You are basically one person, but you end up with two minds. One mind thinks that perhaps there is some usefulness to the recitation, while the other mind says, "What am I doing reciting things that I don't even understand?" That kind of division is to be feared. You must recite single-mindedly.

"*Mwo He*" means Great. "*Sa Dan Dwo Bwo Da La*" refers to the "Great White Canopy." When you recite *San Dan Dwo Bwo Da La*, a Great White Canopy manifests in the emptiness where you are. The size of the canopy depends on the amount of your skill. If your skill is great and lofty, then when you recite this phrase of the

canopy, there will be no disasters for thousands of miles around. If your skill is small, then the canopy will cover your own head and protect you alone. If one has virtue in the Way, if one is a great and virtuous high Sanghan, then when one recites this line of mantra, the entire country can benefit from it. The entire area will be free from calamities; great disasters will turn into small ones, and small disasters won't even happen.

Now we are having the Shurangama Lecture Dharma Assembly, and a lot of people are cultivating the secret Dharma of the Buddha, so I believe that all of America is benefiting from it. Americans may not be aware of it, but we are saving their lives. It is all done invisibly, and they never have any idea of who has saved them or even that they have been saved. Nor do we wish them to know. This is a case of there being no giver and no receiver. The three-wheeled substance of the giver, the gift, and the receiver is empty. When we save people, it is not necessary to get them to thank us. This is where the wonder lies.

Sutra:

"It is the invisible appearance atop the summit of the Thus Come One. It is the spiritual mantra proclaimed by the Buddha of the unconditioned mind who comes forth from the summit in a blaze of light and sits upon a jeweled lotus flower.

Commentary:

The Shurangama Mantra **"is the invisible appearance atop the summit of the Thus Come One."** It cannot be seen by people's ordinary physical eyes. As the Sutra later describes it,

> *"At that time, a hundred brilliant rays sprang from the World Honored One's crown, and a thousand-petalled precious lotus arose from amidst those rays. Upon the precious flower sat the Thus Come One's transformation. From the crown of his head, in turn, he emitted ten beams, each composed of a hundred rays of precious light. Every one of these glowing rays shone on lands as many as the*

sands of ten Ganges Rivers, while Vajra Trace Secret Spirits, each holding aloft a mountain and grasping a pestle, pervaded empty space.

"The great assembly, gazing upward, felt fearful admiration and sought the Buddha's kind protection. Single-mindedly they listened, as the Thus Come One in the light on the invisible summit of the Buddha proclaimed the spiritual mantra."

I know this passage by heart. I'll never forget it. It is **the Buddha of the unconditioned mind who comes forth from the summit in a blaze of light and sits upon a jeweled lotus flower,** and proclaims the spiritual mantra. People who are able to encounter this spiritual mantra have great good roots from the past. Otherwise, even if they encountered it, they could not learn it. They would never be able to memorize it. That's why I'm testing you on the Shurangama Mantra. Two have already passed the test. The rest of you had better get busy.

M2 He also shows it is not difficult to get rid of these habits.

Sutra:

"What is more, your past lives with Matangi's daughter created accumulated kalpas of causes and conditions. Your habits of fondness and emotional love go back not just one life, nor even just one kalpa. Yet, as soon as I proclaimed it, she was freed forever from the love in her heart and accomplished Arhatship.

Commentary:

"**What is more, your past lives with Matangi's daughter created accumulated kalpas of causes and conditions.** Your affinities go way back. You were married to each other five hundred times. **Your habits of fondness and emotional love go back not just one life, nor even just one kalpa.** You two have very deep habits of mutual regard and fondness for each other. It does not

pertain to just one time, nor to one life, nor even to just one kalpa. It's been going on for a long, long time. **Yet, as soon as I proclaimed it, she was freed forever from the love in her heart.** Matangi's daughter renounced her emotional love, and she **accomplished Arhatship.**" After she heard the mantra and returned to receive the Buddha's instruction, she became enlightened and was certified to the third fruition of Arhatship. When Manjushri spoke about perfect penetration, she was certified to the fourth fruition of Arhatship. Her accomplishment of the fourth fruition was very quick. Ananda is still at the first fruition at this point. He hasn't made any progress.

Sutra:

"That prostitute, who had no intention of cultivating, was imperceptibly aided by that spiritual power and was swiftly certified to the position beyond study; then what about you Sound-Hearers in the assembly, who seek the most supreme vehicle and are resolved to accomplish Buddhahood? For you it should be as easy as tossing dust into a favorable wind. What, then, is the problem?

Commentary:

"That prostitute, who had no intention of cultivating, was imperceptibly aided by that spiritual power and was swiftly certified to the position beyond study." Matangi's daughter was a prostitute. She basically wasn't interested in cultivating the Way. Nonetheless, the power of the spiritual mantra aided her in a secret way, and she attained the fourth fruition of Arhatship very quickly. "**Then what about you Sound-Hearers in the assembly, who seek the most supreme vehicle and are resolved to accomplish Buddhahood?** You Sound-Hearers in this Dharma assembly are in search of the Buddha-Vehicle and will certainly become Buddhas. **For you it should be as easy as tossing dust into a favorable wind. What, then, is the problem?** Once a good wind takes the dust, the dust will blow away. What's the difficulty? What's the danger? There isn't any.

K2 A general explanation of samadhi and wisdom in the bodhimanda.
L1 Because of precepts one produces samadhi.

Sutra:

"Those in the final age who wish to sit in a Bodhimanda must first hold the pure precepts of a bhikshu. To do so, they must find as their teacher a foremost Shramana who is pure in the precepts. If they do not encounter a member of the Sangha who is truly pure, then it is absolutely certain that their deportment in precepts and rules can not be accomplished.

Commentary:

"Those in the final age who wish to sit in a Bodhimanda must first hold the pure precepts of a bhikshu." The first thing that people in the Dharma-ending Age have to do if they wish to set up Bodhimandas – perhaps temples or stupas or Way-places of other sorts – is receive the Bhikshu precepts and then uphold them purely. Anyone who wants to leave the home-life must take the precepts in order to do so. Once one has received the precepts, one is a Bhikshu. Then one must strictly uphold the precepts and rules. There must not be the slightest violation. **"To do so, they must find as their teacher a foremost Shramana who is pure in the precepts."** They look for a nationally respected Shramana, a High Sanghan. They take him as their teacher. **"If they do not encounter a member of the Sangha who is truly pure, then it is absolutely certain that their deportment in precepts and rules can not be accomplished."** If you don't find a member of the Sangha who holds the precepts purely, then your own deportment with regard to the precepts and rules cannot be brought to fulfillment. You won't be successful in it.

Sutra:

"After accomplishing the precepts, they should put on fresh, clean clothes, light incense in a place where they are alone, and recite the spiritual mantra spoken by the Buddha of the Mind one hundred and eight times. After that, they should secure the boundaries and establish the Bodhimanda.

Commentary:

"**After** successfully **accomplishing the precepts, they should put on fresh, clean clothes.**" New clothes are best, or clean ones that have not been worn. They should **"light incense in a place where they are alone."** You should light incense before the Buddhas and not do anything else but **"recite the spiritual mantra spoken by the Buddha of the Mind one hundred and eight times."** "The Buddha of the Mind" refers to the transformation Buddha atop the invisible summit. This is the mantra spoken by the Buddha of the Mind. The "spiritual mantra" refers to the Heart of the Mantra. Recite this section of the Shurangama Mantra one hundred and eight times. **"After that, they should secure the boundaries and establish the Bodhimanda."** One secures the boundaries to the east as far as they extend, to the west as far as they extend, to the south as far as they extend, and to the north as far as they extend. Once the boundaries are secured, the heavenly demons and adherents of external ways are not permitted to enter the enclosed area. Thus, the Bodhimanda and platform will not be plagued by demonic deeds. In this way, the platform, the Bodhimanda, is established.

Sutra:

"In the countries within them, they should seek for the unsurpassed Thus Come Ones throughout the ten directions to emit a light of great compassion and anoint the crowns of their heads.

Commentary:

As they recite a hundred and eight times and establish the Bodhimanda, **"in the countries within them, they should seek for the unsurpassed Thus Come Ones throughout the ten directions,"** that is, in the Buddhalands found within the boundaries, **"to emit a light of great compassion and anoint the crowns of their heads."** They should beseech all the Buddhas in the lands of the ten directions contained within the boundaries they

have secured to emit a great, compassionate light to moisten and nourish them on the crowns of their heads.

L2 Because of samadhi one opens wisdom.

Sutra:

"Ananda, when any such pure bhikshus, bhikshunis, or white-robed donors in the Dharma-ending Age who can rid their minds of greed and lust hold the Buddha's pure precepts, and in a bodhimanda make the vows of a Bodhisattva and can bathe upon entering each time, and day and night for three weeks without sleep continue this practice of the Way, I will appear before these people in a physical form and rub the crowns of their heads to comfort them and enable them to become enlightened."

Commentary:

"**Ananda, when any such pure bhikshus, bhikshunis, or white-robed donors in the Dharma-ending Age –** At that time there may be pure bhikshus or bhikshunis or laypeople… "Donor" is the Sanskrit "danapati". The Chinese transliteration divides into a word that means "giving" and the word "to transcend." It refers to those people who protect the Triple Jewel. If such people **"can rid their minds of greed and lust,"** that is, get rid of sexual desire, **"hold the Buddha's pure precepts, and in a bodhimanda make the vows of a Bodhisattva"**:

1. Living beings are boundless; I vow to save them.
2. Afflictions are endless; I vow to cut them off.
3. Dharma-doors are limitless; I vow to study them completely.
4. The Buddha-Way is unsurpassed; I vow to accomplish it.

These are the Four Vast Vows of a Bodhisattva.

If these people **"can bathe upon entering each time, and day and night for three weeks without sleep continue this practice of the Way"**: They make the Bodhisattva's vows in the

Bodhimanda, and then they recite the spiritual mantra, the Shurangama Mantra. If they go out, they bathe before they return. Throughout the six periods of the day and night, they practice for three weeks, sitting for three-hour stretches and walking for three-hour stretches. During these twenty-one days and nights, they do not sleep. **"I will appear before these people in a physical form and rub the crowns of their heads to comfort them and enable them to become enlightened."** Shakyamuni Buddha says, "I will appear in person before such people and rub the tops of their heads with my hand. I will enable them to obtain the fruition of sagehood."

CHAPTER 2

Establishing the Bodhimanda

G2 At second request he explains in detail.
H1 At second request he describes the bodhimanda.
I1 Ananda asks again.

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, enveloped in the Thus Come One's unsurpassed, compassionate instruction, my mind has already become enlightened, and I know how to cultivate and be certified to the Way Beyond Study. But for those who cultivate in the final age and want to establish a bodhimanda: how do they secure the boundaries in accord with the rules of purity of the Buddha, the World Honored One?"

Commentary:

After Ananda heard what the Buddha had said, he thought to ask about how to secure the boundaries and establish the Bodhimanda. **Ananda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, enveloped in the Thus Come One's unsurpassed, compassionate instruction, my mind has already become enlightened, and I know how to cultivate and be certified to the Way Beyond Study.** I can accomplish the karma in the Way of fourth-stage Arhatship and beyond. I am capable of this, **but for those who**

cultivate in the final age and want to establish a bodhimanda: how do they secure the boundaries in accord with the rules of purity of the Buddha, the World Honored One? In the future, in the Dharma-ending Age, there will be people who want to set up this kind of Bodhimanda. How do they secure the boundaries? How do they accord with your pure rules in doing it, Buddha?"

I2 The world honored one answers again.
J1 Establishing the bodhimanda.
K1 The platform.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "If there are people in the Dharma-ending Age who wish to establish a bodhimanda, they should first find a powerful white ox in snowy mountains, one which eats the lush and fertile sweet-smelling grasses of the mountain. Since such an ox also drinks only the pure water of the snowy mountains, its excrement will be very fine. They can take that excrement, mix it with chandana, and plaster the ground with it.

Commentary:

Shakyamuni **Buddha**, having heard Ananda ask about the method for securing the boundaries in accord with the Buddha's rules, **said to Ananda, "If there are people in the Dharma-ending Age who wish to establish a Bodhimanda, they should first find a powerful white ox in snowy mountains, one which eats the lush and fertile sweet-smelling grasses of the mountain. Since such an ox also drinks only the pure water of the snowy mountains, its excrement will be very fine. They can take that excrement, mix it with chandana, and plaster the ground with it."** The grasses eaten by the ox are fragrant and so its excrement can be mixed with powdered chandana incense for smearing on the ground.

Sutra:

"If it is not in the snowy mountains, the ox's excrement will stink and cannot be used to smear on the ground. In that case,

select a level place, dig down five feet or so, and use that yellow earth.

Commentary:

"**If it is not in the snowy mountains, the ox's excrement will stink.** If the ox does not reside in snowy mountains, it will smell bad and be impure and so its excrement cannot be used to smear on the ground. **In that case, select a level place, dig down five feet or so, and use that yellow earth.** In that case, you should select a flat place, dig down about five feet, and take the yellow earth at that level."

Sutra:

"Mix it with chandana incense, sinking-in water incense, jasmine incense, continuously permeating incense, burnished gold incense, white paste incense, green wood incense, fragrant mound incense, sweet pine incense, and chicken-tongue incense. Grind these ten ingredients to a fine powder, make a paste, and smear it on the ground of the platform. The area should be sixteen feet wide and octagonal in shape.

Commentary:

"**Mix it with chandana incense, sinking-in-water incense** (*agaru*), **jasmine incense** (*sumana*), **continuously permeating incense, burnished gold incense** (*kunkuma*), **white paste incense, green wood incense, fragrant mound incense** (*kunduruka*), **sweet pine incense, and chicken-tongue incense.** You mix the yellow earth with these ten kinds of incense. **Grind these ten ingredients to a fine powder, make a paste, and smear it on the ground of the platform. The area should be sixteen feet wide and octagonal in shape."**

K2 The adornments.

Sutra:

"In the center of the platform, place a lotus flower made of gold, silver, copper, or wood. In the middle of the flower set a

bowl in which dew that has collected in the eighth lunar month has been poured. Let an abundance of flower petals float on the water. Arrange eight circular mirrors in each direction around the flower and the bowl. Outside the mirrors place sixteen lotus flowers and sixteen censers, so that the incense-burners are adorned and arranged between the flowers. Burn only sinking-in-water incense, and do not let the fire be 'seen.'

Commentary:

"In the center of the Platform, place a lotus flower made of gold, silver, copper, or wood. In the middle of the flower set a bowl in which dew that has collected in eighth lunar month has been poured. Let an abundance of flower petals float on the water. Arrange eight circular mirrors in each direction around the flower and the bowl. Prepare eight circular mirrors and set them around the bowl of flowers so that they correspond to the eight directions, since it is an octagonal platform. **Outside the mirrors place sixteen lotus flowers and sixteen censers, so that the incense-burners are adorned and arranged between the flowers."** The sixteen flowers and the sixteen censers are placed alternately around the Platform. The incense-burners should be adorned so they are pleasing to look at. **"Burn only sinking-in-water incense, and do not let the fire be 'seen.'"** In the censers burn this one kind of incense only. "Do not let the fire be 'seen'" means that the mirror and the flowers should not "see" the fire. In other words, the incense should be lit inside the censer such that the flame is not "visible" in the mirrors or to the flowers.

K3 The offerings.

Sutra:

"Place the milk of a white ox in sixteen vessels, along with cakes made with the milk, rock-candy, oil-cakes, porridge, turushka, honeyed ginger, clarified butter, and filtered honey. These sixteen are set around the outside of the sixteen flowers as an offering to the Buddhas and great Bodhisattvas.

Commentary:

"Place the milk of a white ox in sixteen vessels, along with cakes made with the milk." Some of the milk is mixed with flour and made into cakes. Also placed in the vessels are **"rock-candy, oil-cakes, porridge –** a gruel made with milk and rice – **turushka** incense, **honeyed ginger, clarified butter, and filtered honey. These sixteen are set around the outside of the sixteen flowers."** Place one of the vessels in front of each flower, so that each has one, making sixteen in all. These are "an offering to the Buddhas and great Bodhisattvas."

Sutra:

"At every mealtime and at midnight, prepare a half-pint of honey and three tenths of a pint of clarified butter. Set up a small incense burner in front of the platform. Decoct the fragrant liquid from the turushka incense and use it to cleanse the coals. Light them so that a blaze bursts forth, and toss the clarified butter and honey into the flaming censer. Let it burn until the smoke disappears, and present it to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Commentary:

"At every mealtime and at midnight – it should be done during the day at mealtimes and also at midnight **– prepare a half-pint of honey and three tenths of a pint of clarified butter. Set up a small incense burner in front of the Platform."** This is yet another burner, apart from the ones on the Platform. It is placed in front of the Platform. **"Decoct the fragrant liquid from turushka incense and use it to cleanse the coals."** All the charcoal used in the burner should first be washed with the fragrant liquid obtained from turushka, a very fragrant incense. **"Light them so that a blaze bursts forth.** Light the burner so that the fire is strong and hot. **Toss the clarified butter and honey into the flaming censer. Let it burn until the smoke disappears, and present it to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas."** Take the end-product and offer it to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

There are a lot of things like this in the Secret School. They often burn combinations of honey and butter and offer them to the Buddhas. They burn not only that, but anything else of value, such as gold, jewels, and other valuable materials. They first burn them and then offer them to the Buddhas.

Sutra:

"About the four outside walls one should suspend flags and flowers, and within the room where the platform is located, one should arrange on the four walls images of the Thus Come Ones and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions.

Commentary:

"About the four outside walls one should suspend flags and flowers." This refers to the four outer walls of the room in which the platform is located. **"And within the room where the platform is located, one should arrange on the four walls images of the Thus Come Ones and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions."**

Sutra:

"In the most prominent place, display images of Vairocana Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha, Maitreya Bodhisattva, Akshobhya Buddha, Amitabha Buddha, and all the magnificent transformations of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva. To the left and right, place the Vajra-Treasury Bodhisattvas. Beside them display the lords Shakra and Brahma, Ucchushma, and the Blue Dirgha, as well as Kundalin and Bhrukuti and all Four Heavenly Kings, with Vinayaka to the left and right of the door.

Commentary:

"In the most prominent place, display images of Vairocana Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha, Maitreya Bodhisattva, Akshobhya Buddha, Amitabha Buddha, and all the magnificent transformations of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva." "Vairocana" means "Pervading All Places." Maitreya Bodhisattva is the next Buddha, the Buddha-to-be. He is the plump Bodhisattva.

Akshobhya Buddha is in the east; he is also known as Medicine Master Buddha. Akshobhya means "Unmoving." The east is usually associated with movement, but the Buddha of the east is unmoving. Amitabha means "Limitless Light" and "Limitless Life." As to the magnificent transformations of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva, we have heard about them already in this sutra, in the passage that said the Bodhisattva may have one head, three heads, five heads, seven heads, nine heads, eleven heads, or one hundred and eight heads. It said he may have one hand, three hands, five hands, seven hands, nine hands, as many as one hundred and eight hands, a thousand hands, ten thousand hands, or eighty-four thousand hands.

"To the left and right, place the Vajra Treasury Bodhisattvas," the Dharma Protectors. They have stern countenances often terrifying to behold. **"Beside them display the lords Shakra and Brahma."** Shakra is the Lord of the Heaven of the Thirty-three. He is known as God Almighty, or the Heavenly Lord. Brahma is Lord of the Great Brahma Heaven. Also display **"Ucchushma and the Blue Dirgha as well as Kundalin and Bhrukuti."** Ucchushma is "Fire-head Vajra." Blue Dirgha has a blue face and is a Dharma protector. Kundalin means "releasing the knots of resentment"; it is another name for a Vajra Spirit. Bhrukuti is also a Dharma protector. Display as well images of **"all Four Heavenly Kings, with Vinayaka to the left and right of the door."** Vinayaka is another Dharma protector who is particularly ugly and frightening. The Chinese description is of two beings, Dharma Protector P'in Na, who has a human body and a boar's head, and Dharma Protector Yeh Chia who has a human body and an elephant's head and a long trunk. The Indian depictions show Vinayaka, identified with the god Ganesha (*Ganapati*), as one being possessing a human body with an elephant head. Vinayaka also appears as two standing beings with human bodies and elephant heads; the transformation into such bizarre appearances is intentional in order to instill fear in people so they will behave themselves. At the door of the

Bodhimanda, then, these images are placed on both sides for protection.

K4 The mirrors.

Sutra:

"Then suspend eight mirrors in the space around the platform so that they are exactly opposite the mirrors on the platform. This will allow the reflections in them to interpenetrate ad infinitum.

Commentary:

"Then suspend eight mirrors in the space around the platform so that they ate exactly opposite the mirrors on the platform." "How can they be hung in space?" you wonder. Just as one hangs a lamp from the ceiling. How could one hang them in space alone like the sun? That's not what's meant here. The meaning is to hang them so that they are suspended in the space in the room. The mirrors are placed facing one another. **"This will allow the reflections in them to interpenetrate ad infinitum."** That means that the image in one is caught in the other, and within that the image of the interpenetration is shown, and so on, layer within layer in never-ending succession.

J2 Stages of cultivation and accomplishment.
K1 First three weeks: initial accomplishment of samadhi and wisdom.

Sutra:

"During the first seven days, bow sincerely to the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions, to the great Bodhisattvas, and to the names of the Arhats. Throughout the six periods of the day and night, continually recite the mantra as you circumambulate the platform. Practice the way with a sincere mind, reciting the mantra one hundred and eight times at a stretch.

Commentary:

"During the first seven days, bow sincerely to the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions, to the Great Bodhisattvas, and

to the names of the Arhats. Throughout the six periods of the day and night, continually recite the mantra as you circumambulate the Platform." "The mantra" here is the entire Shurangama Mantra. **"Practice the Way with a sincere mind, reciting the mantra one hundred and eight times at a stretch."** "A sincere mind" means that you don't think of anything else; you single-mindedly hold to the mantra. Each time you recite, go through the mantra one hundred and eight times without stopping.

Sutra:

"During the second week, direct your intent by making the vows of a Bodhisattva. The mind should never be cut off from them. In my vinaya, I have already taught about vows.

Commentary:

"**During the second week** of practice, **direct your intent by making the vows of a Bodhisattva.** You must be ever more sincere and concentrated. Make the four vast vows of a Bodhisattva:

1. Living beings are boundless; I vow to save them.
2. Afflictions are endless; I vow to cut them off.
3. Dharma-doors are limitless; I vow to study them completely.
4. The Buddha Way is unsurpassed; I vow to accomplish it

"The mind should never be cut off from them." This means the mind never stops reciting the Shurangama Mantra, and it never ceases to bring forth the four vast vows. **"In my Vinaya, I have already taught about vows."** When I spoke the precepts, I taught the practice of making vows.

Sutra:

"During the third week, one holds the Buddha's mantra, Bwo Da La, for twelve hours at a time, with a single intent; and on the seventh day, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions will appear simultaneously. Their light will be mutually

reflected in the mirrors and will illumine the entire place; and they will rub one on the crown of one's head.

Commentary:

"During the third week, one holds the Buddha's mantra, Bwo Da La for twelve hours at a time, with a single intent." One holds and recites the mantra *Syi Dan Dwo Bwo Da La*, spoken by the Buddha, that is, the Shurangama Mantra. **"On the seventh day, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions will appear simultaneously.** They will suddenly appear in the Bodhimanda all at the same time. **Their light will be mutually reflected in the mirrors and will illumine the entire place, and they will rub one on the crown of one's head."** You will have the crown of your head rubbed by the Buddhas of the ten directions, and this act will be reflected within the facing mirrors in a bright image which repeats itself ad infinitum.

Sutra:

"If one cultivates this samadhi in the Bodhimanda, then even in the Dharma-ending Age one can study and practice until one's body and mind are as pure and clear as Vaidurya.

Commentary:

"**If one cultivates this samadhi in the Bodhimanda** with a platform as described above, and if the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions appear simultaneously and aid one by rubbing one on the crown of the head, and if in this way one can practice samadhi, cultivating the return of the hearing to hear the self-nature, **"then even in the Dharma-ending Age one can study and practice until one's body and mind are as pure and clear as Vaidurya."** One's body and mind will become as transparent as crystal and will shine with light.

K2 After one hundred more days: sudden certification to the sagely fruit.

Sutra:

"Ananda, if any one of the bhikshu's precept transmitting masters or any one of the other bhikshus practicing with him is not pure, the Bodhimanda as described will not be successful.

Commentary:

Ananda, you should know that if the bhikshu who is cultivating and upholding this method with the Shurangama Mantra had even one Precept-transmitting Master who was not pure, or if he is cultivating this practice with another bhikshu who is not pure, then the method will not be successful." It won't work if any one of these people is impure, that is, if they don't hold the precepts purely. Perhaps they hold the precepts and yet violate them. One is not supposed to kill, but they have killed; or one is not supposed to steal, but they have stolen; one is not supposed to commit acts of deviant sexual conduct and they have done so; or one is not supposed to lie, but they have lied. The Buddha taught us not to lie, but they dispense with the "not" and just hold to the "lie." If that is how it is, the Bodhimanda will not be successful. All the work of cultivating, all the mantras you held, will still not bring you success. Therefore, if you practice this Dharma and do not get a response from your cultivation, you cannot say, "I cultivated for three weeks, but Shakyamuni Buddha and the Buddhas of the ten directions did not come and rub me on the crown of the head. I didn't even see them. Probably Shakyamuni Buddha was also lying." That is not the case. Perhaps you yourself are not pure, or the teachers from whom you received the precepts were not pure, or any one of the ten people you are practicing this Dharma with may not be pure. If there is even one impure person involved, this state will not be accomplished. This is extremely important.

Sutra:

"After three weeks, one sits upright and still for a hundred days. Those with sharp faculties will not arise from their seats

and will become Shrotaapannas. Although their bodies and minds have not attained the ultimate fruition of sagehood, they know for certain, beyond exaggeration, that they will eventually accomplish Buddhahood.

"After three weeks, one sits upright and still for a hundred days." One sits in meditation, but not like some people who sit still for two hours and consider it a superb feat. They consider themselves to be outstanding people, but actually, if we compare that to what is described here, it's like a kitten encountering a lion. "Upright" means that one does not lean to the left or right, or lean forward or back or get up or stretch out one's legs. It's not sitting there and thinking, "Ah my legs really hurt!" Sitting "still" means that nothing troubles one. Sitting for a hundred days means one does not go eat or even get up to relieve oneself. One simply sits for one hundred days. **"Those with sharp faculties will not arise from their seats and will become Shrotaapannas."** People who are intelligent and have good roots can then sit for one hundred days and be certified to the first stage of Arhatship. But now you can't even sit still for one whole day, and yet there are some who think they have reached the fruition of a sage. That's really ridiculous. You have to be able to sit for a hundred days to accomplish first-stage Arhatship. **"Although their bodies and minds have not attained the ultimate fruition of sagehood, they know for certain, beyond exaggeration, that they will eventually accomplish Buddhahood."** They still have not attained genuine samadhi-power in their cultivation, but they know for a fact that they will certainly become Buddhas. It is definitely not a false notion.

K3 Concludes answer to question.

Sutra:

"You have asked how the Bodhimanda is established. This is the way it is done."

Commentary:

This is how you set it up.

CHAPTER 3

The Spiritual Mantra

H2 On second request he speaks the spiritual mantra.
I1 The entire assembly asks again.

Sutra:

Ananda bowed at the Buddha's feet and said, "After I left the home-life, I relied on the Buddha's affectionate regard. Because I sought erudition, I still have not been certified to the unconditioned.

Commentary:

After **Ananda** heard this description by Shakyamuni Buddha, he **bowed at the Buddha's feet and said, "After I left the home-life, I relied on the Buddha's affectionate regard.** I counted on the Buddha's fondness for me, on his special affection. **Because I sought erudition, I still have not been certified to the unconditioned."** He was always concerned about being better than everyone else. "I wanted to surpass others," and so he had the idea, "You can't recite the sutra from memory, but I can. You can't even explain that sutra, and I remember every word of it." He was always competing to be number one. He decided to use erudition to obtain the first position. True enough, Ananda became foremost in learning, but he still did not certify to the unconditioned. He still

had not reached to the fruition of sagehood that was unconditioned. He couldn't obtain the level beyond study. This was of great harm to him.

Sutra:

"When I encountered that Brahma Heaven Mantra, I was captured by the deviant spell; though my mind was aware, I had no power to free myself. I had to rely on Manjushri Bodhisattva to liberate me. Although I was blessed by the Thus Come One's spiritual mantra of the Buddha's summit and imperceptibly received its strength, I still have not heard it myself.

Commentary:

"**When I encountered that Brahma Heaven Mantra, I was captured by the deviant spell; though my mind was aware, I had no power to free myself.** I became confused by the deviant spell of the externalist way, by the deviant trick of a demonic dharma. I was physically captured by the spell; my body was confused by it, but my mind was still somewhat clear." His mind was not totally alert, but he wasn't totally muddled, either. He was in a daze, as if he were asleep, and yet he was awake. He was as if drunk, but he hadn't taken anything intoxicating. But the effect was much the same as with drink. When you ask a person who's recovered from a drunken binge what he did while under the influence, he will remember some things and forget others. That's the state Ananda was in. Or he was like a person who is about to drift off to sleep; he isn't quite asleep, and yet he has a dream, or what seems to be a dream. He had no power to free himself. It's like encountering a demonic ghost while you are asleep at night, such as a kumbhanda ghost, which uses a demonic spell to paralyze you. When that happens, you may wake up and stare, but you cannot move You am held by the demonic power of the ghost. That's what Ananda experienced. Although he was conscious, he was not in control of himself. He could not get free. **"I had to rely on Manjushri Bodhisattva to liberate me."** The Buddha commanded

Manjushri Bodhisattva to come and save me. I depended on the Buddha to have Manjushri Bodhisattva rescue me. He freed me.

"Although I was blessed by the Thus Come One's spiritual mantra of the Buddha's summit and imperceptibly received its strength, I still have not heard it myself. The World Honored One, the Thus Come One, the Buddha, used the spiritual mantra spoken by the transformation Buddha atop the Buddha's summit. And when Manjushri Bodhisattva came to where I was and recited the mantra, I received the benefit invisibly." That means that when Manjushri Bodhisattva got there, he didn't chant the mantra in a loud voice; he merely had to recite it silently to free Ananda. It's all right to recite the mantra loudly when you are before the Buddhas in the temple, but when you are out at other places, you can recite it silently and it is just as effective. If you got out on the streets and start bellowing, "*Na Mwo Sa Dan Two Su Chye Dwo Ye…*" people are going to think you are crazy. You needn't be attached to some particular ritual and thereby cause people to slander the Dharma, which is what they would be doing if they said you were crazy. When they commit slander, they commit offenses. You don't want to say, "If he commits offenses, that's his problem. I'll recite even louder and let him slander even more so that he commits even greater offenses, and he will surely fall into the hells." If you have that kind of attitude and intentionally cause people to commit offenses so that they fall into the hells, then you shouldn't even study the Buddhadharma. People who study the Buddhadharma are sympathetic and compassionate toward others. Their attitude is to do nothing that would cause anyone else to fall into the hells, even to the point that they would rather go to the hells themselves than cause anyone else to go. That's the way you should be. You cannot think, "He slandered me, let him fall into the hells." Or, "If I have a run-in with someone, I will go after them and recite the Shurangama Mantra, and then when they slander me they will fall into the hells." If you have that kind of thought, then you'd better stop reciting the Shurangama Mantra right this minute and leave off your study of the Buddhadharma. That's because people who study

the Buddhadharma must not hate people, must not be jealous of people, must not obstruct people, must not be selfish in these ways. One cannot have the attitude, “I’m fine, to heck with you.” The Buddhadharma exists for the sake of rescuing all living beings. It is not designed to cause living beings to commit offenses. You must be clear about this point.

Ananda says, “I imperceptibly received its strength, but I still haven’t actually heard it.” I got the strength from it, but silently and invisibly. So I’ve never actually heard it. Although I received the benefit of it, I still don’t even know how to recite it. I’ve never even heard it!’

Sutra:

“I only hope that the greatly compassionate one will proclaim it again to kindly rescue all the cultivators in this assembly and those of the future who undergo the turning wheel, so that they may become liberated in body and mind by relying on the Buddha’s secret sounds.”

Commentary:

“**I only hope that** the World Honored One, **the Greatly Compassionate One will proclaim it again.** My one wish is that the Buddha would speak it again so that I can hear it and also **to kindly rescue all the cultivators in this assembly.** Please speak it also to rescue **those of the future who undergo the turning wheel** of the six paths, **so that they may become liberated in body and mind by relying on the Buddha’s secret sounds.** Based on the Buddha’s secret syllables, they will become free. They will not be upside down or confused We recite the Shurangama Mantra every day just to help people stop being upside down and confused and to help them stay away from doing things which they clearly know are wrong. For instance, one knows that taking opium is wrong – that it wastes time and dissipates one’s energy – yet, one still insists on smoking it. Clearly knowing that the use of marijuana is a violation of the law, still one “must” try it out. Well aware that killing is not right, one still takes the lives of living beings. Knowing without a

doubt that indulging in sexual misconduct is not right, one conducts oneself in this way nonetheless. Knowing full well that it is wrong to steal, one spends all day and night taking things from other people – if it's not a car, it's a tape-recorder or a radio. A thief knows full well he is breaking the law, and that if he is caught the police will take him to jail, but still he goes and does it. That's "doing things which they clearly know are wrong."

Sutra:

At that moment, everyone in the great assembly bowed as one and stood waiting to hear the Thus Come One's secret divisions and phrases.

Commentary:

At that moment, everyone in the great assembly, the huge multitude of beings in that gathering, **bowed as one and stood waiting to hear the Thus Come One's secret divisions and phrases.** They all bowed together to the Buddha and then stood on tiptoe waiting for the Buddha to speak the secret sections and divisions of the mantra. "Divisions" refers to the five major sections of the mantra. The "phrases" are smaller parts consisting of several lines each, such as "*Na Mwo Sa Dan Two* / *Su Chye Dwo Ye* / *E La He Di* / *San Myau San Pu Two Sye*." But these divisions and phrases are secret, that is, they are not easy for people to understand. They are "secret" in the sense that people do not share a common knowledge about them. When you recite them, you do not know what advantages you obtain. I do not know what advantages I obtain. Although benefit is obtained, there is no mutual awareness of it among those benefited, nor is there a common understanding of the mantra itself.

I2 The Thus Come One answers again.
J1 He speaks the spiritual mantra.
K1 An appearance of light.

Sutra:

At that time, a hundred brilliant rays sprang from the mound of the flesh on the crown of the World Honored One's

head. A thousand-petalled precious lotus arose from amidst those rays. Upon the precious flower sat the Thus Come One's transformation.

Commentary:

At that time, a hundred brilliant rays sprang from the mound of the flesh on the crown of the World Honored One's – Shakyamuni Buddha's – **head. A thousand-petalled precious lotus arose from amidst those rays. Upon the precious flower sat the Thus Come One's transformation.** A transformation body of the Buddha sat upon the thousand-petalled precious lotus in the midst of the hundred rays of light.

Sutra:

From the crown of its head, in turn, he emitted ten beams, each composed of a hundred rays of precious light. Every one of those glowing rays shone on lands as many as the sands of ten Ganges Rivers, while throughout empty space there were Vajra Secret-Traces Spirits, each holding aloft a mountain and wielding a pestle.

Commentary:

From the crown of its head, in turn, he emitted ten beams, each composed of a hundred rays of precious light. "Crown" here refers to the crown of the head of the Thus Come One's transformation. Another ten beams of light issued forth out the top of the head of the transformation-body Buddha. **Every one of those glowing rays shone on lands as many as the sands of ten Ganges Rivers.** These rays of light shone everywhere – on countless countries, **while throughout empty space there were Vajra Secret-Traces Spirits, each holding aloft a mountain and wielding a pestle.** At the same time that the light shone forth, the Vajra Secret-Traces Dharma protectors held mountains in their bare hands and brandished pestles, like the one Wei T'ou Bodhisattva wields. They were all over the place, filling up all of empty space.

K2 The great assembly respectfully listens.

Sutra:

The great assembly, gazing upward, felt fearful admiration and sought the Buddha's kind protection. Single-mindedly they listened as the Thus Come One in the light at the invisible appearance on the crown of the Buddha's head proclaimed the spiritual mantra:

Commentary:

The great assembly, gazing upward, felt fearful admiration and sought the Buddha's kind protection. All the Great Bodhisattvas, great Arhats, great bhikshus, and all the others in the great gathering, threw back their heads and looked up toward the transformation-body of the Thus Come One atop the crown of the Buddha's head. Some felt fearful when they saw the transformation Buddha. But at the same time, they admired that Thus Come One. They loved him, but not with the emotional love that exists between men and women. What they felt was true love, free of desire or longing. They had both these feelings at the same time – they were awestruck and yet drawn by love. So they hoped the Buddha would take pity on them and also protect them. **Single-mindedly they listened as the Thus Come One in the light at the invisible appearance on the crown of the Buddha's head proclaimed the spiritual Mantra.** They were all of one mind. They all wanted to listen to the Buddha. The mound of flesh on the crown of the Buddha's head is called the "invisible appearance on the crown." It is called the "invisible appearance" because ordinary people cannot see it. Those who saw the hundred rays of light and the transformation Buddha atop the crown of the Buddha's head were sages who had been certified to the fruition. The transformation Buddha that was emitted from the invisible appearance on the crown hovered in space and proclaimed the spiritual Mantra.

So, the Shurangama Mantra was not spoken by Shakyamuni Buddha himself in the flesh, but rather it was proclaimed by the Transformation body Buddha he sent out into empty space.

As to the Mantra, no one understands it. Nor is it possible to explain it syllable by syllable and line by line. But if you want to understand it, I can try to explain it for you. However, this is not the time for that, because we are in the middle of the explanation of the *Shurangama Sutra*, and the Mantra alone couldn't be completely explained in a year, or even in three years, or even ten years. So, at this point it cannot be explained thoroughly. I will simply explain the general meaning of the Mantra.

The Mantra has five divisions which correspond to the five directions – north, south, east, west, and the middle. The Eastern Division is the Vajra Division, with Akshobhya Buddha as the teaching host. The Southern Division is the Production-of-Jewels Division, with Production-of-Jewels Buddha as the teaching host. The Central Division is the Buddha Division, with Shakyamuni Buddha as the teaching host. The Western Division is the Lotus Division, with Amitabha Buddha as the teaching host. The Northern Division is the Karma Division, with Accomplishment Buddha as the teaching host. There are five divisions, because there are five huge demonic armies in this world. There are demons to the east, south, west, north, and in the center. Since there are these five demon armies, not just five demons, the Buddhas also cover the five directions to suppress the demons. If there were no Buddhas, the demons could appear openly in the world.

Within the five divisions of the Mantra there are, in general, more than thirty Dharmas, and it has more than a hundred Dharmas that can be discussed in detail. There are five major kinds of Dharmas:

1) Dharmas of Accomplishment. This means that with this Dharma, you will be successful in what you seek or in what you vow or wish for.

2) Dharmas of Increasing Benefit. This means that when you recite this Mantra, you can increase benefits which you yourself seek and you can also increase benefits for other people.

3) Dharmas of Hooking and Summoning. This means, literally, to "hook in" and catch and to call with a command all the weird beings, demons, and ghosts. No matter how far away they might be from you, you can bring them in and capture them. For instance, suppose one of them is harming someone, and when they finish they run away. If one knows how to use the Dharma of Hooking and Summoning, then no matter how far that being may have run, you can arrest him

4) Dharmas of Subduing. Demons also have spiritual penetrations and mantras which they use. When you recite your mantras, they recite their mantras. But if you can use the Shurangama Mantra, you can smash through all their mantras I've told you before about the section of the Mantra which is for smashing the demon kings. It also is effective in destroying their mantras and spells. Although I've taught you this already, it bears repeating here. Those who have not studied this yet can take note of it. Why was it that as soon as the Shurangama Mantra was recited the Former Brahma Heaven Mantra lost its effectiveness? It was because of the "Five Great Heart Mantras."

Chr Two Ni
E Jya La
Mi Li Ju
Bwo Li Dan La Ye
Ning Jye Li

These five lines are called the "Five Great Heart Mantras." It is the fundamental mantra for destroying the mantras and spells of the heavenly demons and adherents of externalist ways. It doesn't matter what kind of mantra they come up with; you can destroy it with this one. Their mantras will lose their effectiveness. This Dharma I've just transmitted could sell for several million dollars, but I do not sell it. Seeing that you have a certain amount of sincerity, I transmit it to you absolutely free

5) Dharmas of Dispelling Disasters. Whatever calamity is due to occur can be prevented. For instance, suppose a person was due to fall into the sea and drown, but by reciting the Shurangama Mantra, he avoids the catastrophe. He might fall into the sea, but he doesn't drown. Perhaps you are in a boat that ought to sink, but you recite this Mantra and the boat does not go down. Maybe you're in an airplane that is destined to crash, but you recite the Shurangama Mantra and the plane lands without incident. I'll tell you something incredible. I was going from Burma to Thailand, an air route that is particularly dangerous. But during that trip, the plane didn't show the effects of any turbulence. The ride was absolutely smooth. Even the pilot commented, "Why has it been such smooth going on this trip?" He had no idea that during that ride the gods, dragons, and the rest of the eightfold division, as well as Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, were on all sides of the airplane guarding and protecting it.

That's the way the Dharma of Dispelling Disasters works. When there clearly should be an accident, it can change big disasters to small ones and make small ones never even happen. Usually what happens is there's "alarm but no danger" if you recite the Shurangama Mantra.

In general, the Mantra contains Dharmas of Auspiciousness. This means that when you recite the Shurangama Mantra, everything goes just as you'd like it to. It's really lucky and extremely auspicious.

The advantages of the Mantra are so many that one could not even begin to express them in several years time. But at this time, I'll limit my explanation to these few Dharmas and meanings.

K3 The five sections of the spiritual mantra.

Sutra:

I.

na mwo sa dan two
su chye dwo ye
e la he di

san myau san pu two sye
na mwo sa dan two
fwo two jyu jr shai ni shan
na mwo sa pe
bwo two bwo di
sa dwo pi bi
na mwo sa dwo nan
san myau san pu two jyu jr nan
swo she la pe jya
seng chye nan
na mwo lu ji e lwo han dwo nan
na mwo su lu dwo bwo nwo nan
na mwo swo jye li two chye mi nan
na mwo lu ji san myau chye dwo nan
san myau chye be la di bwo dwo nwo nan
na mwo ti pe li shai nan
na mwo syi two ye
pi di ye
two la li shai nan
she pwo nu
jya la he
swo he swo la mwo two nan
na mwo ba la he mwo ni
na mwo yin two la ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
lu two la ye
wu bwo be di
swo syi ye ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
nwo la ye

na ye
pan je mwo he san mwo two la
na mwo syi jye li dwo ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
mwo he jya la ye
di li bwo la na
chye la pi two la
bwo na jya la ye
e di mu di
shr mwo she nwo ni
pe syi ni
mwo dan li chye na
na mwo syi jye li dwo ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
dwo two chye dwo jyu la ye
na mwo be tou mwo jyu la ye
na mwo ba she la jyu la ye
na mwo mwo ni jyu la ye
na mwo chye she jyu la ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
di li cha
shu la syi na
bwo la he la na la she ye
dwo two chye dwo ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
na mwo e mi dwo pe ye
dwo two chye dwo ye
e la he di
san myau san pu two ye
na mwo pe chye pe di

e chu pi ye
dwo two chye dwo ye
e la he di
san myau san pu two ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
bi sha she ye
jyu lu fei ju li ye
bwo la pe la she ye
dwo two chye dwo ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
san bu shr bi dwo
sa lyan nai la la she ye
dwo two chye dwo ye
e la he di
san myau san pu two ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
she ji ye mu nwo ye
dwo two chye dwo ye
e la he di
san myau san pu two ye
na mwo pe chye pe di
la dan na ji du la she ye
dwo two chye dwo ye
e la he di
san myau san pu two ye
di pyau
na mwo sa jye li dwo
yi tan pe chye pe dwo
sa dan two chye du shai ni shan
sa dan dwo bwo da lan

na mwo e pe la shr dan
bwo la di
yang chi la
sa la pe
bwo dwo jye la he
ni jye la he
jye jya la he ni
ba la bi di ye
chr two ni
e jya la
mi li ju
bwo li dan la ye
ning jye li
sa la pe
pan two nwo
mu cha ni
sa la pe
tu shai jya
tu syi fa
bwo na ni
fa la ni
je du la
shr di nan
jye la he
swo he sa la rau she
pi dwo beng swo na jye li
e shai ja bing she di nan
na cha cha dan la rau she
bwo la sa two na jye li
e shai ja nan

mwo he jye la he rau she
pi dwo beng sa na jye li
sa pe she du lu
ni pe la rau she
hu lan tu syi fa
nan je na she ni
pi sha she
syi dan la
e ji ni
wu two jya la rau she
e bwo la shr dwo jyu la
mwo he bwo la jan chr
mwo he dye dwo
mwo he di she
mwo he shwei dwo she pe la
mwo he ba la pan two la
pe syi ni
e li ye dwo la
pi li jyu jr
shr pe pi she ye
ba she la mwo li di
pi she lu dwo
bwo teng wang jya
ba she la jr he nwo e je
mwo la jr pe
bwo la jr dwo
ba she la shan chr
pi she la je
shan dwo she pi ti pe bu shr dwo
su mwo lu bwo

mwo he shwei dwo
e li ye dwo la
mwo he pe la e bwo la
ba she la shang jye la jr pe
ba she la
jyu mwo li
jyu lan two li
ba she la he sa dwo je
pi di ye
chyan je nwo
mwo li jya
ku su mu pe
jye la dwo nwo
pi lu je na
jyu li ye
ye la tu
shai ni shan
pi je lan pe mwo ni je
ba she la jya na jya bwo la pe
lu she na
ba she la dwun jr je
shwei dwo je
jya mwo la
cha che shr
bwo la pe
yi di yi di
mu two la
jye na
swo pi la chan
jywe fan du

yin tu na mwo mwo sye

II.
wu syin
li shai jye na
bwo la she syi dwo
sa dan two
chye du shai ni shan
hu syin du lu yung
jan pe na
hu syin du lu yung
syi dan pe na
hu syin du lu yung
bwo la shai di ye
san bwo cha
na jye la
hu syin du lu yung
sa pe yau cha
he la cha swo
jye la he rau she
pi teng beng sa na jye la
hu syin du lu yung
je du la
shr di nan
jye la he
swo he sa la nan pi teng beng sa na la
hu syin du lu yung
la cha
pe chye fan
sa dan two

chye du shai ni shan
bwo la dyan
she ji li
mwo he swo he sa la
bwo shu swo he sa la
shr li sha
jyu jr swo he sa ni
di li e bi ti shr pe li dwo
ja ja ying jya
mwo he ba she lu two la
di li pu pe na
man cha la
wu syin
swo syi di
bwo pe du
mwo mwo
yin tu na mwo mwo sye

III.
la she pe ye
ju la be ye
e chi ni pe ye
wu two jya pe ye
pi sha pe ye
she sa dwo la pe ye
pe la jau jye la pe ye
tu shai cha pe ye
e she ni pe ye
e jya la
mi li ju pe ye

two la ni bu mi jyan
bwo chye bwo two pe ye
wu la jya pe dwo pe ye
la she tan cha pe ye
nwo chye pe ye
pi tyau dan pe ye
su bwo la na pe ye
yau cha jye la he
la cha sz jye la he
bi li dwo jye la he
pi she je jye la he
bu dwo jye la he
jyou pan cha jye la he
bu dan na jye la he
jya ja bu dan na jye la he
syi chyan du jye la he
e bwo syi mwo la jye la he
wu tan mwo two jye la he
che ye jye la he
syi li pe di jye la he
she dwo he li nan
jye pe he li nan
lu di la he li nan
mang swo he li nan
mi two he li nan
mwo she he li nan
she dwo he li nyu
shr bi dwo he li nan
pi dwo he li nan
pe dwo he li nan

e shu je he li nyu
jr dwo he li nyu
di shan sa pi shan
sa pe jye la he nan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
bwo li ba la je jya
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
cha yan ni
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
mwo he bwo su bwo dan ye
lu two la
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
nwo la ye na
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
dan two chye lu cha syi
chi li dan

pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
mwo he jya la
mwo dan li chye na
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
jya bwo li jya
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
she ye jye la
mwo du jye la
sa pe la two swo da na
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
je du la
pe chi ni
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
pi li yang chi li jr
nan two ji sha la
chye na bwo di

swo syi ye
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
na jye na she la pe na
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
e lwo han
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
pi dwo la chye
chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
ba she la bwo ni
jyu syi ye jyu syi ye
jya di bwo di chi li dan
pi two ye she
chen two ye mi
ji la ye mi
la cha wang
pe chye fan
yin tu na mwo mwo sye

IV.
pe chye fan
sa dan dwo bwo da la
na mwo tswei du di
e syi dwo na la la jya
bwo la pe syi pu ja
pi jya sa dan dwo be di li
shr fwo la shr fwo la
two la two la
pin two la pin two la
chen two chen two
hu syin hu syin
pan ja pan ja pan ja pan ja pan ja
swo he
syi syi pan
e mu jye ye pan
e bwo la ti he dwo pan
pe la bwo la two pan
e su la
pi two la
bwo jya pan
sa pe ti pi bi pan
sa pe na chye bi pan
sa pe yau cha bi pan
sa pe chyan ta pe bi pan
sa pe bu dan na bi pan
jya ja bu dan na bi pan
sa pe tu lang jr di bi pan
sa pe tu sz bi li
chi shai di bi pan

sa pe shr pe li bi pan
sa pe e bwo syi mwo li bi pan
sa pe che la pe na bi pan
sa pe di di ji bi pan
sa pe dan mwo two ji bi pan
sa pe pi two ye
la shr je li bi pan
she ye jye la
mwo du jye la
sa pe la two swo two ji bi pan
pi di ye
je li bi pan
je du la
fu chi ni bi pan
ba she la
jyu mwo li
pi two ye
la shr bi pan
mwo he bwo la ding yang yi
chi li bi pan
ba she la shang jye la ye
bwo la jang chi la she ye pan
mwo he jya la ye
mwo he mwo dan li jya na
na mwo swo jye li dwo ye pan
bi shai na bei ye pan
bwo la he mwo ni ye pan
e chi ni ye pan
mwo he jye li ye pan
jye la tan chr ye pan

mye dan li ye pan
lau dan li ye pan
je wen cha ye pan
jye lwo la dan li ye pan
jya bwo li ye pan
e di mu jr dwo
jya shr mwo she nwo
pe sz ni ye pan
yan ji jr
sa two pe sye
mwo mwo yin tu na mwo mwo sye

V.
tu shai ja jr dwo
e mwo dan li jr dwo
wu she he la
chye pe he la
lu di la he la
pe swo he la
mwo she he la
she dwo he la
shr bi dwo he la
ba lyau ye he la
chyan two he la
bu shr bwo he la
pwo la he la
pe sye he la
be bwo jr dwo
tu shai ja jr dwo
lau two la jr dwo

yau cha jye la he
la cha swo jye la he
bi li dwo jye la he
pi she je jye la he
bu dwo jye la he
jyou pan cha jye la he
syi chyan two jye la he
wu dan mwo two jye la he
che ye jye la he
e bwo sa mwo la jye la he
jai chywe ge
cha chi ni jye la he
li fwo di jye la he
she mi jya jye la he
she jyu ni jye la he
mu two la
na di jya jye la he
e lan pe jye la he
chyan du bwo ni jye la he
shr fwo la
yin jya syi jya
jywe di yau jya
dan li di yau jya
je tu two jya
ni ti shr fa la
bi shan mwo shr fa la
bwo di jya bi di jya
shr li shai mi jya
swo ni bwo di jya
sa pe shr fa la

shr lu ji di
mwo two pi da lu jr chyan
e chi lu chyan
mu chywe lu chyan
jye li tu lu chyan
jya la he
jye lan jye na shu lan
dan dwo shu lan
chi li ye shu lan
mwo mwo shu lan
ba li shr pe shu lan
bi li shai ja shu lan
wu two la shu lan
jye jr shu lan
ba syi di shu lan
wu lu shu lan
chang chye shu lan
he syi dwo shu lan
ba two shu lan
swo fan ang chye
bwo la jang chye shu lan
bu dwo bi dwo cha
cha chi ni
shr pe la
two tu lu jya
jyan du lu ji jr
pe lu dwo pi sa bwo lu
he ling chye
shu sha dan la
swo na jye la

pi sha yu jya
e chi ni
wu two jya
mwo la pi la
jyan dwo la
e jya la
mi li du
da lyan bu jya
di li la ja
bi li shai jr jya
sa pe na jyu la
sz yin chye bi
jye la li yau cha
dan la chu
mwo la shr
fei di shan
swo pi shan
syi dan dwo bwo da la
mwo he ba she lu shai ni shan
mwo he bwo lai jang chi lan
ye bwo tu two
she yu she nwo
byan da li na
pi two ye
pan tan jya lu mi
di shu
pan tan jya lu mi
bwo la pi two
pan tan jya lu mi
dwo jr two

nan
e na li
pi she ti
pi la ba she la
two li
pan two pan two ni
ba she la bang ni pan
hu syin du lu yung pan
swo pe he.

J2 He speaks of the benefits of the mantra.
K1 The important tool of all Buddhas.
L1 He explains the entire name.

Sutra:

"Ananda, this cluster of light atop the crown of the Buddha's head, the secret gatha, Syi Dan Dwo Bwo Da La, with its subtle, wonderful divisions and phrases, gives birth to all the Buddhas of the ten directions. Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions use this mantra-heart, they realize unsurpassed, proper, and all-pervading knowledge and enlightenment.

Commentary:

"**Ananda, this cluster of light atop the crown of the Buddha's head, the Secret Gatha, Syi Dan Dwo Bwo Da La,** is again, the Great White Canopy, which can cover over the entire system of three thousand great thousand worlds to protect all the living beings in it. "Gatha" is a Sanskrit term which means "repetitive verses." The Mantra is secret, and since some of its lines are repeated, it is referred to as the "secret gatha." These "divisions and phrases" which comprise the Mantra are extremely rare and miraculous.

This Mantra, **"with its subtle, wonderful divisions and phrases, gives birth to all the Buddhas of the ten directions."** Therefore, the Shurangama Mantra can be called the "Mother of Buddhas."

"Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions use this Mantra-heart, they realize unsurpassed proper and all-pervading knowledge and enlightenment." It is by means of the Shurangama Mantra that the Buddhas realize proper and all-pervading awareness. "Proper knowledge" means they know that the mind gives rise to the myriad dharmas; "all-pervading knowledge" means that they know that the myriad dharmas come only from the mind.

L2 He states its functions.

Sutra:

"Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions take up this mantra-heart, they subdue all demons and control all adherents of outside ways.

Commentary:

The "Mantra-Heart" – the Shurangama Mantra – was spoken by a transformation body Buddha seated upon a jeweled lotus amidst a thousand rays of light at the crown of the Buddha Shakyamuni's head. **"Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions take up this Mantra-Heart, they subdue all demons and control all adherents of outside ways."** It is the heart of mantras, and it is a mantra-heart of the Buddhas. Therefore, what the heavenly demons and adherents of outside ways fear most is the Shurangama Mantra.

Sutra:

"Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions avail themselves of this mantra-heart, they sit upon jeweled lotus-flowers and respond throughout countries as numerous as motes of dust.

Commentary:

"Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions avail themselves of this Mantra-Heart": They borrow the Mantra; as it were, they ascend the Mantra-Heart, and **they sit upon jeweled lotus-flowers –** huge blossoms – **and respond throughout countries as numerous as motes of dust."** Their Response-bodies are able to go throughout lands as numerous as fine motes of dust, due to the power of the Shurangama Mantra-Heart.

Sutra:

"Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions embody this mantra-heart, they turn the great dharma wheel in lands as numerous as fine motes of dust.

Commentary:

When **"the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions turn the great Dharma-Wheel in lands as numerous as fine motes of dust,** they also base themselves on this Mantra. **They embody this Mantra-Heart."**

Sutra:

"Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions hold this mantra-heart, they are able to go throughout the ten directions to rub beings on the crowns of their heads and bestow predictions upon them. Also, anyone in the ten directions who has not yet realized the fruition, can receive a Buddha's prediction.

Commentary:

"Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions hold this Mantra-Heart – they receive and uphold this Mantra-Heart, and **so they are able to go throughout the ten directions to rub beings on the crowns of their heads and bestow predictions upon them.** They bestow predictions of Buddhahood on other living beings. **Also, anyone in the ten directions who has not yet realized the fruition, can receive a Buddha's prediction."** If you have not

realized the fruition, the Buddhas may still rub the crown of your head and bestow a prediction on you.

Sutra:

"Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions are based in this mantra-heart, they can go throughout the ten directions to rescue beings from such sufferings as being in the hells, being hungry ghosts, being animals, or being blind, deaf, or mute, as well as from the suffering of being together with those one hates, from the suffering of being apart from those one loves, from the suffering of not obtaining what one seeks, and from the raging blaze of the five skandhas. They liberate beings from both large and small accidents. In response to their recitation, difficulty with thieves, difficulty with armies, difficulty with the law, difficulty with imprisonment, difficulty with wind, fire, and water, and difficulty with hunger, thirst, and impoverishment are all eradicated.

Commentary:

"Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions are based in this Mantra-Heart, they can go throughout the ten directions to rescue beings from such sufferings as…"

1. birth,
2. old age,
3. sickness,
4. death,
5. being apart from those one loves,
6. being together with those one hates,
7. being unable to obtain what one seeks,
8. the raging blaze of the five skandhas.

There are also eight difficulties:

1. the difficulty of the hells,
2. the difficulty of hungry ghosts,
3. the difficulty of animals,

4. the difficulty of being blind, deaf, or mute,
5. the difficulty of being in Uttarakuru,
6. the difficulty of being born at a time when there is no Buddha in the world,
7. the difficulty of having worldly intelligence and powers in debate,
8. the difficulty of being reborn in the long-life heavens.

The beings in the Northern Continent, Uttarakuru, have a very long lifespan. They live an average of a thousand years. Life on that continent is extremely blissful; the difficulty is that the beings there have no opportunity to see the Buddha, hear the Dharma, or meet the Sangha. Therefore, living there is included among the Eight Difficulties. The same is true for beings in the heavens; although the lifespan is long, they have no chance to encounter the Triple Jewel. So that, too, is a difficulty.

"Having worldly intelligence and powers in debate" refers to different branches of mundane knowledge, such as the fields of science. They try to express principles where there are no principles and to give reasons when there aren't any.

"...being in the hells, being hungry ghosts, being animals, or being blind, deaf, or mute," are among the Eight Difficulties.

Then there is **"the suffering of being together with those one hates."** This is when you move to get away from someone you can't stand, only to find that when you get to the new place, there's a person just like him there! There is also **"the suffering of being apart from those one loves."** You love someone especially, but circumstances force you to be apart. Again, there is **"the suffering of not obtaining what one seeks."** When you don't have something that you want, you seek for it. But if you encounter this suffering, you fail to get what you seek. **"The raging blaze of the five skandhas" –** form, feeling, thought, activity, and consciousness, the five skandhas, burn like fire.

"They liberate beings from both large and small accidents." This can refer to untimely deaths, such as being killed in an automobile accident, being crushed by a falling building, or any other fatal accident. They can also liberate beings from **"difficulty with thieves, difficulty with armies, difficulty with the law, difficulty with imprisonment, difficulty with wind, fire, and water, and difficulty with hunger, thirst, and impoverishment. In response to their recitation, all** these difficulties **are eradicated.**

Sutra:

"Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions are in accord with this mantra-heart, they can serve good and wise advisors throughout the ten directions. In the four aspects of awesome deportment, they make wish-fulfilling offerings. In the assemblies of as many Thus Come Ones as there are sands in the Ganges, they are considered to be great Dharma Princes.

Commentary:

"Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions are in accord with this Mantra-Heart, they can serve Good and Wise Advisors throughout the ten directions. They respectfully offer up their services to Good and Wise Advisors. **In the four aspects of awesome deportment, they make wish-fulfilling offerings.** In the ceremony of offering to the Triple Jewel, their conduct is perfectly appropriate. **In the assemblies of as many Thus Come Ones as there are sands in the Ganges, they are considered to be great Dharma Princes."** They are the foremost disciples of the Buddha.

Sutra:

"Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions practice this mantra-heart, they can gather in and teach their relatives in the ten directions. Causing those of the Small Vehicle not to be frightened when they hear the secret treasury.

Commentary:

"Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions practice this Mantra-Heart, they can gather in and teach their relatives in the ten directions." Buddhas have the six kinds of close relatives, too, and they first gather in and teach those of their relatives who draw near to them. Why was it that when Shakyamuni Buddha became a Buddha he went first to the Deer Wilds Park to take across the five bhikshus? It is because those five bhikshus were his relatives in that present life and had been his relatives in lives past. They can teach them, **"causing those of the Small Vehicle,"** that is, their relatives who have fallen into studying the Small Vehicle dharmas, **"not to be frightened when they hear the Secret Treasury."** When they hear the treasury of secrets told by the Buddha, the Great Vehicle Dharma they are not afraid.

Sutra:

"Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions recite this mantra-heart, they realize unsurpassed enlightenment while sitting beneath the Bodhi tree, and they enter Parinirvana.

Commentary:

"Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions recite this Mantra-Heart…" How do the Thus Come Ones in the ten directions become Buddhas? It is also because they recite this Mantra-Heart. "Recite" means to repeat from memory without looking at the book. **"They realize unsurpassed enlightenment while sitting beneath the Bodhi tree,** and become Buddhas because they recite this Mantra. **And they enter Parinirvana."**

Sutra:

"Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions transmit this mantra-heart, those to whom they have bequeathed the Buddhadharma can, after their Nirvana, dwell in it completely

and uphold it. Being strict and pure about the precepts and rules, they can all obtain purity.

Commentary:

“Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions, transmit this Mantra-Heart, those to whom they have bequeathed the Buddhadharma can, after their Nirvana, dwell in it completely and uphold it. After the Buddhas go to Nirvana, people who inherit the Dharma from them know how to cultivate and to receive and uphold the Buddhadharma. **Being strict and pure about the precepts and rules, they can all obtain purity.”** It is because of the power of the Mantra that they obtain purity and perfection.

L3 Further explanations are endless.

Sutra:

“If I were to explain this mantra, Bwo Da La, of the cluster of light atop the crown of the Buddha’s head from morning till night in an unceasing sound, without ever repeating any syllable or phrase, I could go on for as many kalpas as there are sands in the Ganges and still never finish.

Commentary:

“If I were to explain this Mantra, Bwo Da La, of the cluster of light atop the crown of the Buddha’s head from morning till night in an unceasing sound, without ever repeating any syllable or phrase”: The “Mantra Bwo Da La” refers to the Shurangama Mantra, the “Durable Mantra,” the Mantra of the Great White Canopy. **“I could go on for as many kalpas as there are sands in the Ganges and still never finish.”** I would never come to the end of my explanation of the Shurangama Mantra-Heart’s merits and virtues and wonderful functions.

K2 A beneficial reliance for living beings.
L1 Specific explanation of the supreme name.

Sutra:

"I also will tell you that this mantra is called 'The crown of the Thus Come One.'

Commentary:

"**I also will tell you that this Mantra is called 'The Crown of the Thus Come One.'** That's another name for it."

L2 A thorough discussion of its awesome power.
M1 He first explains that by diligently holding it, cultivators can rely on it.
N1 He explains that recitation of it will keep demons away.

Sutra:

"All of you with something left to study who have not yet put an end to the cycle of rebirth and yet have brought forth sincere resolve to become Arhats, will find it impossible to sit in a Bodhimanda and be far removed in body and mind from all demonic deeds if you do not hold this Mantra.

Commentary:

"**All of you with something left to study who have not yet put an end to the cycle of rebirth** are still caught in the turning wheel of the six paths. **And yet you have brought forth sincere resolve to become Arhats.** You would like to attain the fruition of Arhatship. But you **will find it impossible to sit in a Bodhimanda and be far removed in body and mind from all demonic deeds if you do not hold this Mantra."** If you want to become an Arhat and yet do not hold this Mantra, or if you want to sit in a Bodhimanda and become a Buddha, and yet have part in demonic activities, either physically or mentally, you are attempting the impossible. In other words, you must recite this Mantra to be free of demonic doings. If you don't hold this Mantra, you cannot sit in the Bodhimanda, nor can you stay away from the deeds of demons.

N2 Writing it out and carrying it is of benefit.

Sutra:

"Ananda, let any living being of any country in any world copy out this mantra in writing on materials native to his region, such as birch bark, pattra, plain paper, or white cotton cloth, and store it in a pouch containing incense. If that person wears the pouch on his body, or if he keeps a copy in his home, then you should know that even if he understands so little that he cannot recite it from memory, he will not be harmed by any poison during his entire life.

Commentary:

The functions of the Mantra are discussed here. **"Ananda, let any living being of any country in any world" –** this means that in this world or another world or in any one of limitless worlds, a person may **"copy out this Mantra in writing on materials native to his region."** The person could be American, English, French, German, Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Thai, Burmese, Ceylonese, or a citizen of any other country at all. Perhaps he writes on "**birch bark** or on **pattra**, which are palm leaves, on **plain paper, or white cotton cloth.**" Whether he writes it out on paper or cloth or some other material that can be written on does'nt matter. And he can copy it carefully and respectfully, or write it out casually in long-hand. Let him **"store it in a pouch containing incense. If that person wears the pouch on his body, or if he keeps a copy in his home, then you should know that even if he understands so little that he cannot recite it from memory, he will not be harmed by any poison during his entire life."** If the person doesn't have a good memory or if he is muddle-headed and can't recite the Mantra well, he can write the Mantra out and wear it in a little bag, or he can write it out and hang it on the wall of his house. If someone does that, he will go through his entire life without being poisoned. There are strong and weak poisons, but no matter what kind it is, it cannot harm him.

M2 A detailed account of the ways in which it protects life and aids people on the path.
N1 General mention of these two aspects.

Sutra:

"Ananda, I will now tell you more about how this mantra can rescue and protect the world, help people obtain great fearlessness, and bring to accomplishment living beings' transcendental wisdom.

Commentary:

"Ananda, I will now tell you more about how this Mantra, the Shurangama Mantra, **can rescue and protect the world, help people obtain great fearlessness, and bring to accomplishment living beings' transcendental wisdom."** It can fulfill any wishes living beings might have, but most importantly it can reveal their transcendental wisdom.

N2 Detailed listing of its many merits.
O1 Apparent benefit to each living being.
P1 Rescues from calamities.
Q1 Evil situations cannot bring harm.

Sutra:

"You should know that, after my extinction, if there are beings in the Dharma-ending Age who can recite the mantra themselves or teach others to recite it, such people who recite and uphold it cannot be burned by fire, cannot be drowned by water, and cannot be harmed by mild or potent poisons.

Commentary:

"You should know that, after my extinction, if there are beings in the Dharma-ending Age" – this includes you and me – **"who can recite the Mantra themselves or teach others to recite it, such people who recite and uphold it cannot be burned by fire."** Perhaps one can recite the Mantra from memory or teach others to recite it from memory. People who can recite the Mantra from memory or can read it will not be burned by fire, and they

“cannot be drowned by water, nor can they be harmed by mild or potent poisons.”

Q2 Evil beings cannot break through its added protection to cause harm.

Sutra:

“And so it is in every other case, such that they cannot be possessed by any evil mantra or any heavenly dragon, ghost, or spirit, or by any essence, weird creature, or demonic ghost. These people’s minds will attain proper reception, so that any spell, any paralyzing sorcery, any poison or poisoning gold, any poisoning silver, any plant, tree, insect, or snake, and any of a myriad kinds of poisonous vapors will turn into sweet dew when it enters their mouths.

Commentary:

“And so it is in every other case, such that they cannot be possessed by any evil mantra or any heavenly dragon, ghost, or spirit, or by any essence, weird creature, or demonic ghost.” All these kinds of ghosts and demons use evil spells. The five phrases of the Mantra I told you about recently,

Chr Two Ni
E Jya La
Mi Li Ju
Bwo Li Dan La Ye
Ning Jye Li

represent the Five Directions, the Five Divisions, and the Five Buddhas. They are known as the “Five Great Heart Mantras.” You should not regard them as ordinary. Together they comprise the Heart-Mantra of the Buddhas of the Five Directions. The function of this Heart-mantra is to destroy the mantras and spells of demons. It doesn’t matter what kind of evil spell they are weaving; you can smash through it with this Mantra. Their mantras lose all their effectiveness. They are rendered useless. These evil mantras cannot possess you, because the “Five Great Heart Mantras” destroy them.

"These people's minds will attain proper reception." If you recite the Shurangama Mantra, you can obtain proper concentration, **"so that any spell" –** any devious mantra of the heavenly demons or of adherents of externalist ways-cannot harm you. **"Any paralyzing sorcery"**: There is a lot of sorcery in Southern China, also in Southeast Asia such as Burma, Korea, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and such places. The kind of sorcery they use, called *ku* is also based on mantras and spells. If you eat something poisoned by them, you are forever under their spell; you must do as they command. If you don't, you die. In Australia, in the mountain regions, there is a religious sect that uses mantras to shrink people's heads to the size of chicken eggs. And then they put them on display as sorcerer's charms. In a world as large as this, there's every kind of weird thing imaginable. You shouldn't have the attitude that if you haven't seen it, you don't believe it exists. If you don't believe it, you're just plain stupid. Why do I say that? There are lots of things you've never seen, and if you go on with the idea that you must see them before you believe them, you'll never finish in your entire life. Before America was discovered, before anyone knew it existed, if you had approached someone and tried to convince him that there was, in fact, another continent with mountains and all the rest, he very likely would not have believed you. But, though he may have denied the existence of America, would that have meant that America did not, in fact, exist? Was it there before it was discovered? Whether or not he admitted its existence, it still existed. By the same token, whether or not you believe that the strange things being discussed here exist, they exist nonetheless, So if you deny the existence of a thing just because you haven't seen it yourself, you basically don't have a grasp of the way the world really is.

If someone sinks some *ku* in you, if they apply their sorcery to you, you are forever their slave. If you oppose them, you die. In addition to *ku* poison, if **"any poison or poisoning gold, any poisoning silver, any plant, tree, insect, or snake, or any of a**

myriad kinds of poisonous vapors enter the mouth of people who recite the Shurangama Mantra, **it will turn into sweet dew.”**

“Suppose I test this,” you suggest. “Suppose I experiment.” You still haven’t perfected your recitation of the Shurangama Mantra. When you’ve got it down to the point that it’s efficacious and magical, then you can experiment. Before you reach that stage, don’t play around with it.

Sutra:

“No evil stars, and no ghost or spirit that harbors malice in its heart and that poisons people can work its evil on these people. Vinayaka as well as all the evil ghost kings and their retinues will be led by deep kindness to always guard and protect them.

Commentary:

The previous section of text said that any kind of poisonous thing that enters the mouth of a person who recites hand upholds the Shurangama Mantra will turn into sweet dew. These things are basically poisonous, but their composition changes. And the change comes about because one recites and upholds the Shurangama Mantra. **No evil star** refers to evil constellations and such things as *T’ai Sui* and the White tiger Star, which is terrible. And there is the star *Sang Men*, which is extremely inauspicious and can kill people. But none of these kinds of stars can harm one, nor can any **“ghost or spirit that harbors malice in its heart and poisons people.”** Some people say they don’t believe in ghosts or spirits. They have never seen a ghost, and so they don’t believe there are any. If they saw one, they’d have no way not to believe in it, even if they didn’t want to. “Malice is also a kind of poison, like arsenic. That drug is fatal if more than a little is taken. But someone with even that much poison in his heart still cannot harm a person who recites and upholds the Shurangama Mantra. He cannot **“work his evil on these people.”** Rather, the poison in their own hearts is transformed.

Vinayaka was mentioned in the description of setting up the Bodhimanda. He is a protector with the various transformations which often show a boar or an elephant head with a trunk on a human body. In general he is extremely ugly. He **"as well as the evil ghost kings and their retinues will be led by deep kindness to always guard and protect them."** Having been influenced by the profound compassion of the Buddha in the past, these ghost kings and Dharma protectors have resolved to always guard and protect those who recite and uphold the Shurangama Mantra. The advantages of reciting the Shurangama Mantra are truly inconceivable.

P2 Aids in accomplishing way karma.
Q1 The value of its recitation.

Sutra:

"Ananda, you should know that eighty-four thousand nayutas of Ganges' sands of kotis of Vajra Treasury-King Bodhisattvas and their descendants, each with vajra multitudes as retinue, are ever in attendance, day and night, upon this mantra.

Commentary:

"Nayuta" is one of the fourteen large numbers in Sanskrit. Some say it represents one trillion; others say ten trillion. In general, it's a big number. "Ganges' sands of kotis" is said to be equivalent to a trillion. Not only are the Vajra Treasury-King Bodhisattvas in attendance on the Mantra, those of their lineage are also present. And each member of the entire lineage is accompanied by a retinue of Vajra beings. Day and night, they are always present wherever the Shurangama Mantra is being upheld.

These Bodhisattvas are the ones praised in the section above:

1) Namo Buddhas of the Ten Directions,
2) Namo Dharma of the Ten Directions,
3) Namo Sangha of the Ten Directions,
4) Namo Shakyamuni Buddha,

5) Namo Foremost Shurangama Atop the Buddha's Summit,
6) Namo Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva,
7) Namo Vajra Treasury Bodhisattvas.

The eighty-four thousand are referred to in the last line. But actually, it's not only the Vajra Treasury Bodhisattvas who are so numerous. The retinues of all Bodhisattvas are that numerous.

Sutra:

"If living beings whose minds are scattered and who have no samadhi remember and recite the mantra, the vajra kings will always surround them. Therefore, good men, that is even more true for those who are decisively resolved upon Bodhi. All the Vajra Treasury-King Bodhisattvas will regard them attentively and secretly hasten the opening of their spiritual consciousness.

Commentary:

"If living beings whose minds are scattered" – their thoughts go every which way and are not the least bit concentrated. They also have **"no samadhi** power, but they **remember and recite the Mantra."** They remember the Shurangama Mantra spoken by the Buddha. "**The Vajra Kings,** the Bodhisattvas, **will always surround them,** that is, those with scattered minds, if they uphold the Shurangama Mantra. **Therefore, good men, that is even more true for those who are decisively resolved upon Bodhi.**" You people who have firmly brought forth the Bodhi-mind will also be protected by these **Vajra Treasury-King Bodhisattvas,** who **"will regard you attentively and secretly hasten the opening of your spiritual consciousness."** With close regard for you, they will help you in hidden ways. What will they do? They will help you increase your wisdom – your spiritual consciousness Little by little they will help those who have scattered minds to become concentrated. Gradually they will obtain samadhi-power. Invisibly they will help those who hold the Mantra to open their wisdom and become single-minded.

Sutra:

"When that response occurs, those people will be able to remember the events of as many kalpas as there are grains of sand in eighty-four thousand Ganges Rivers, knowing them all beyond any doubt.

Commentary:

When the Vajra-Treasury-King Bodhisattvas invisibly open their spiritual awareness – "**When that response occurs, those people will be able to remember the events of as many kalpas as there are grains of sand in eighty-four thousand Ganges Rivers, knowing them all beyond any doubt."** They know very clearly about everything that took place throughout such a long period of time. They have wisdom that has gone beyond doubt. This means they obtain the penetration of Past Lives. They know the things that happened in the past.

Q2 Separation from various destinies.

Sutra:

"From that kalpa onward, through every life until the time they take their last body, they will not be born where there are yakshas, rakshasas, putanas, kataputanas, kumbhandas, pishachas and so forth; where there is any kind of hungry ghost, whether with form or lacking form, or with thought or lacking thought, or in any such evil place.

Commentary:

"From that kalpa onward, through every life until the time they take their last body," that is, when they become a Buddha, **"they will not be born where there are yakshas."** They will be born and die again and again, but they will not be born in bad paths, such as that of the yakshas, 'speedy ghosts'. Nor will they get born where there are **"rakshashas,"** 'terrifying ghosts' that eat people. When a person dies, this kind of ghost uses a mantra to change the flesh of the decaying corpse back into fresh meat and eats it. Nor will they have to be around **"putanas,"** 'bad-smelling ghosts',

which are both evil and foul-smelling. If you encounter such a ghost, you will contract a fever. “Putanas” are also known as “bhutanas.” Nor will such people be born where there are **“kataputanas,”** “strange-smelling ghosts.” The other one smelled bad, but this one smells weird – an odor you’ve never smelled before, one that is incredibly strong. That’s what’s referred to by the phrase: “It smelled so strange one could not bear to breathe.” If you get a whiff of this odor, it will make you vomit on the spot. It connects with the bad-smelling stuff inside you, so that you have to regurgitate. You spit your insides out. It’s that strong. This ghost causes fevers to an even greater degree of intensity. Your entire body burns with fevers up to l20 degrees and more; it simply burns your bones to ashes. Violent, wouldn’t you say?

They won’t be born where there are **“kumbhandas.”** Actually, all these ghosts have been mentioned before. The kumbhandas are ‘barrel-shaped ghosts.’ These ghosts paralyze people. They come on you in your sleep and paralyze you. You open your eyes to find that you can’t move. Nor can you speak. At its fiercest, it can kill people with the paralysis. If a person has *yang* energy, then the paralysis won’t hold. It only is effective on those who have excessive *yin* energy. What is meant by *yang*? It means always being happy, truly happy in your self-nature, that is, not just laughing it up on the surface of things, “ha, ha, ha.” It refers to the extreme bliss experienced in your inherent nature. If in your self-nature you are always worried and depressed, being afflicted, upset, and distressed all day long, that belongs to *yin*. Those belonging to *yin* are the ones that ghosts can possess. *Yang* belongs to the spirit. Predominance of *yang* is a spirit; predominance of *yin* is a ghost. People who cultivate the Buddha Path and have pure *yang* energy, also have light. But if one is totally *yin*, there is a black energy present. So, it can be told if a person is good or not just by looking at him or her. Good people have white energy around them; bad people have a mass of black energy, demonic energy.

They also will not be born where there are **“pishachas and so forth.”** Pishachas are “essence and energy-eating” ghosts. These

ghosts sap the energy from things as well as from people. This kind of ghost is terrible and not at all good. For the most part, ghosts are bad, but among the path of ghosts are also Bodhisattvas who compassionately and deliberately manifest as ghost-kings in order to take ghosts across.

Nor will they be born **"where there is any kind of hungry ghost."** There are many types of hungry ghosts. Some have huge stomachs. Some have throats as skinny as needles. **"Whether with form or lacking form"**: some have bodies, and some are invisible – they have no physical form. But, just because you can't see something, don't assume it isn't there. Invisible creatures may lack form, but they have consciousness. You cannot see them with the ordinary eyes but if you have the Five Eyes and Six Spiritual Penetrations, it is easy to see them. **"With thought or lacking thought"**: some have the capability of thought, while others have no thought; they are like dirt, wood, metal, and stone. But a person who upholds the Shurangama Mantra will not be born **"in any such evil place."** Life after life, they will not be born in places where there are hungry ghosts or where there are any other kinds of evil.

Q3 Always born where there are Buddhas.

Sutra:

"If these good men read, recite, copy, or write out the mantra, if they carry it or treasure it, if they make offerings to it, then through kalpa after kalpa they will not be poor or lowly, nor will they be born in unpleasant places.

Commentary:

"**If these good men read** the Mantra from a book, or **recite** it from memory; if they **copy** it out respectfully, or casually **write it out; if they carry it** on their person, **or treasure it,** store it in their homes; **if they make offerings to it** of all kinds of incense and flowers, lamps, candles, and fruit – the Shurangama Mantra was spoken by a transformation body of the Buddha, so it is worthy of offerings **– then through kalpa after kalpa they will not be poor**

or lowly, nor will they be born in unpleasant places.” I’ve told you that if you can memorize the Shurangama Mantra to the point that it flows forth from your mind and heart, then you have obtained the Samadhi of Holding the Mantra. Once you obtain that – if you can recite it like flowing water which never ceases – then at the very, very least, you can be fabulously wealthy for seven lives. If you continue reciting it in this way for life after life, you can be wealthy for seventy or seven hundred or seven thousand or seven million lives; there’s nothing fixed about it. As long as you want to be a wealthy person, you can be one. But some day you may have had your fill, because even billionaires have their problems. You may get disgusted. Then you can become a Buddha. Once you become a Buddha, there are no more problems. At that point,

In a state of unmoving suchness,
You are ever bright and clear.

So, I’ll give you a tip ahead of time. Being a billionaire is not as good as becoming a Buddha. People who uphold and venerate the Mantra in these various ways will not be born in places that are worrisome and devoid of bliss. You could not go to those places even if you wanted to. Why? The Shurangama Mantra is pulling at you, telling you not to go. It will be impossible for you to go.

Sutra:

“If these living beings have never accumulated any blessings, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions will bestow their own merit and virtue upon these people.

Commentary:

“**If these living beings** who recite and uphold the Shurangama Mantra, **have never accumulated any blessings –** they’ve never done any good deeds or earned any blessings – then **the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions will bestow their own merit and virtue upon these people.**” Why do they do that? Because these people recite the Shurangama Mantra, or read it, copy it, or write it out. They have no blessings, but the Buddhas of the ten

directions give them blessings. A real bargain, wouldn't you say? All one must do is recite the Shurangama Mantra.

Sutra:

"Because of that, throughout asamkhyeyas of ineffable, unspeakable numbers of kalpas, as many as the Ganges' sands, they are always together with the Buddhas. They are born in the same place, due to their limitless merit and virtue, and, like the amala fruit-cluster, they stay in the same place, become permeated with cultivation, and are never parted.

Commentary:

"Because of that, throughout asamkhyeyas of ineffable unspeakable numbers of kalpas, as many as the Ganges' sands, they are always together with the Buddhas." "The Ganges' sands" indicates a large number. "Asamkhyeya" is also a large number; it means "limitless number" in Sanskrit. This refers to kalpas greater in number than could ever be expressed. **"They are born in the same place, due to their limitless merit and virtue, and, like the amala fruit-cluster, they stay in the same place, become permeated with cultivation, and are never parted."** "Born in the same place" refers not so much to having the same birthplace, as to being born in the same generation. That is, they are always born at a time when there is a Buddha in the world. We are born at a time when there is no Buddha in the world. This is one of the Eight Difficulties: the difficulty of being born before or after the time of a Buddha. Those who are born when a Buddha is in the world are endowed with limitless merit and virtue. The amala fruit-cluster has three fruits on one stem. The fruits themselves are as if three and yet as if one. They cannot be separated one from the other. So, too, these people reside where the Buddha is and become infused with cultivation. They never have to be apart from the Buddha.

Q4 Various practices are accomplished.

Sutra:

"Therefore, it can enable those who have broken the precepts to regain the purity of the precept-source. It can enable those who have not received the precepts to receive them. It can cause those who are not vigorous to become vigorous. It can enable those who lack wisdom to gain wisdom. It can cause those who are not pure to quickly be come pure. It can cause those who do not hold to vegetarianism to become vegetarians naturally.

Commentary:

"Therefore, it can enable those who have broken the precepts to regain the purity of the precept-source." Even those who have broken the precepts can regain the precepts if they genuinely recite and uphold the Shurangama Mantra every day. Basically, someone who has violated the precepts cannot be saved, but if that person recites the Shurangama Mantra, it's possible for them to regain the purity of the precepts. Reciting doesn't just mean a casual recitation; you have to obtain the Samadhi of Holding Mantras, as I just described. Then the Mantra wells up from your heart and returns to your heart. That's what's meant by,

The Mantra-heart,
The Heart of the Mantra.
The Heart of the Mantra,
The Mantra-heart.

The Mantra and your heart become one. There is no distinction between them. You cannot forget it; it recites itself. You are not reciting it, but it is being recited; you are reciting it, but it is as if you were not. Even if you don't want to recite it, it goes on being recited. Right now we recite the Mantra before the Sutra lecture, but that's just a way of preparing the ground for you. It's just pointing out the way for all of you. It's certainly not that it's only

appropriate to recite the Mantra at lecture time. You can recite it anywhere at any time. To know it by heart and to recite to the point that all other false thoughts and scattered thoughts are wiped away, and all that remains is your mind's recitation of the Shurangama Mantra: that's what is called concentration. The recitation comes together and there are no other thoughts. It's like flowing water that goes on and on, coming from afar and rolling by in wave after wave. It's like the blowing wind which comes up invisibly but makes its presence known.

The water flows, the wind blows
Proclaiming the Mahayana.

The sounds of the water and wind speak the Great Vehicle Dharma; they are all the Heart of the Shurangama Mantra.

When recitation reaches that state, **"It can enable those who have broken the precepts to regain the purity of the precept source. It can cause those who have not received the precepts to obtain them. It can cause those who are not vigorous to become vigorous."** People who aren't inclined to progress, who don't investigate the Buddhadharma, can spontaneously give rise to vigor from reciting the Shurangama Mantra over a long period of time. "It can enable those who lack wisdom to gain wisdom." Just look at this: it can enable stupid people to open their wisdom. "It can cause those who are not pure to quickly become pure." If you cultivate and yet are not pure; if you violate the precepts, break the practice of pure eating, and get muddled and unclear for a long time; still, if you don't forget the Shurangama Mantra, you can quickly gain purity. Once you want to change, you can very quickly return to purity. For instance, I know there are those among you here who would like to study the Buddhadharma, but whose bodies and minds are not pure. But it doesn't matter if you lack purity; it's just to be feared you won't study. Because if you study, the day will come when you'll suddenly become pure. You will soon understand. But if you don't study, and you say, "I don't want to become pure; I don't want to be vigorous. I like being lazy. I'd

rather not know anything" – then with that attitude there's nothing that can be done for you. "It can cause those who do not hold to vegetarianism to become vegetarians naturally. If you recite the Shurangama Mantra until it comes together in a concentrated recitation, then the wind can't blow through and the rain can't penetrate. Then, even if you don't hold to vegetarianism, you will automatically do so. Why? Because you won't have any false thoughts, you won't have any greed or desires. You won't be thinking about wanting to eat meat or fish or delicious foods. It won't enter your mind.

Q5 All offenses are eradicated.

Sutra:

"Ananda, if good men who uphold this mantra violated the pure precepts before they received the mantra, their multitude of offenses incurred by violating the precepts, whether major or minor, can simultaneously be eradicated after they begin to uphold the mantra.

Commentary:

This passage gives a clearer explanation. **"Ananda, if good men who uphold this mantra violated the pure precepts before they received the Mantra" –** if they uphold the Mantra now, but violated the pure precepts in the past, breaking them before they received them, **"their multitude of offenses incurred by violating the precepts, whether major or minor, can simultaneously be eradicated after they begin to uphold the Mantra."** All their offenses of breaking the practice of pure eating and of violating the precepts can be eradicated, even the four parajika offenses – "parajika" means 'cause for dismissal" meaning that they cannot be repented of. But if you recite the Shurangama Mantra, then all the offenses you have committed, no matter how serious, will be made clean; it is like pouring boiling water over snow.

Sutra:

"Even if they drank intoxicants or ate the five pungent plants and various other impure things in the past, the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, vajras, gods, immortals, ghosts, and spirits will not hold it against them.

Commentary:

The "five pungent plants" are leeks, garlic, shallots, scallions, and onions. These are the ones common to our area. *Asafoetida*, common in India and often found in curries is another pungent plant included in this list. Since these hot, pungent plants have unpleasant odors, they are prohibited in Buddhism for people who hold to pure eating practices. These are unclean kinds of things to eat and cause desire and anger. But, **"Even if they,** the holders of the Mantra, **drank intoxicants or ate the five pungent plants and various other impure things** in the past, **the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Vajras, gods, immortals, ghosts, and spirits will not hold it against them."** If you can constantly recite and uphold the Shurangama Mantra, the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Dharma protectors will not blame you for your former impure habits.

"If they won't hold it against me, then I can use these things as I please," you may reason. It's still best not to use them.

Sutra:

"If they are unclean and wear tattered, old clothes to carry out the single practice and single dwelling, they can be equally pure. Even if they do not set up the platform, do not enter the Bodhimanda, and do not practice the Way, but recite and uphold this mantra, their merit and virtue will be identical with that derived from entering the platform and practicing the Way.

Commentary:

"If they are unclean and wear tattered, old clothes to carry out the single practice and single dwelling" – above, when the platform was described, the Buddha said that one should put on

new clothes, but here he says one doesn't necessarily have to wear new clothes. If you don't have new clothes, old ones will do. When you go through the three weeks of practice, you can become pure just the same. Because of the power of the Mantra, it makes no difference if the clothes you wear are new or old. The purity obtained is the same. You may wonder why he said to wear new clothes in the first place. We wear new clothes to signify our respect – out of utmost reverence and absolute purity. **"Even if they do not set up the platform, do not enter the Bodhimanda" –** you don't necessarily have to be inside the Bodhimanda. Any place at any time is a place of practice. If they **"do not practice the Way" –** even if they don't cultivate **– "but recite and uphold this Mantra" –** that's all they are able to do in the way of practice **– "Their merit and virtue will be identical with that derived from entering the platform and practicing the Way."** If you can recite the Shurangama Mantra, your merit and virtue are no different from one who can set up the platform and enter the Bodhimanda to practice the Way. There is no distinction. Truly, the virtue of the Shurangama Mantra is inconceivable

Sutra:

"If they have committed the five rebellious acts, grave offenses warranting unintermittent retribution, or if they are bhikshus or bhikshunis who have violated the four parajikas or the eight parajikas, such heavy karma as this will disperse after they recite this mantra, like a sand dune that is scattered in a gale, so that not a particle remains.

Commentary:

"If they have committed the Five Rebellious Acts, grave offenses warranting Unintermittent retribution" – the Five Rebellious Acts are the most serious offenses in all of Buddhism. They are:

1. killing one's mother;
2. killing one's father;
3. killing an Arhat;

4. causing schisms in the harmonious Sangha;
5. shedding the Buddha's blood.

If you deliberately injure the Buddha's body with a knife or some such weapon, or if in some other way you draw blood on the Buddha's body, you have committed this offense.

"I've never even encountered a Buddha. The Buddha left the world, so I have no chance of committing this offense,"

Not so, because to deface a Buddha image or break it is also called shedding the Buddha's blood. Even prints and paintings of Buddhas are included in this. To destroy images of the Buddha when he is not in the world is also included in this offense. "Uninterrupted retribution" refers to the consequence of these offenses. Committing the ten evils brings a bad retribution, but committing the five rebellious acts results in a more severe punishment. If you commit the five rebellious acts, you will certainly fall into the Unintermittent Hell. This hell has been described before. It's full, whether there is one person in it or many people in it. Therefore, it is also called "unspaced," since there is no space in it. It's called unintermittent because the suffering never slacks off even for a second nor does it ever end. It goes on interminably.

"If they are bhikshus or bhikshunis who have violated the Four Parajikas or the Eight Parajikas": "bhikshu" has three meanings:

1. mendicant;
2. frightener of Mara;
3. destroyer of evil.

A bhikshuni is a female member of the Sangha. The Four Parajikas are:

1. sexual misconduct;
2. killing;
3. stealing;
4. making false claims.

These are the four fundamental precepts – “parajikas” in Sanskrit, “causes for dismissal” in English. If you commit any of these four, then you are dismissed from the Sangha of Buddhism. You are cast out of the great sea of the Buddhadharma. And you cannot re-enter. The Four Parajikas are for bhikshus. Bhikshunis have Eight Parajikas. They include the four for the bhikshus, plus:

5. touching;
6. the eight things;
7. covering;
8. not following.

The parajika offense of “touching” is described in the Vinaya as “making contact with a woman while harboring thoughts of sexual desire.” So whether it be a man, a woman, a bhikshu, or a bhikshuni, or a layperson, physical contact between people when there are thoughts of sexual desire is a violation. If one does not have thoughts of sexual desire, there is no violation of the precepts.

The parajika of “the eight things.” A bhikshuni must always be in an open public place when she converses. She cannot go to a concealed place to talk or in a room where she would be alone with a man. In general, a man and woman alone cannot be alone together – be they bhikshuni or bhikshu. For a bhikshu this is a lighter offense; for a bhikshuni it is a heavy one. It is forbidden that a bhikshuni talk alone with a man.

“Covering” means concealing another’s offenses. You hide someone else’s grave offenses and are not frank and open about them. You don’t tell anyone. That’s also a parajika offense for bhikshunis.

“Not following” refers to the recitation of precepts which takes place twice a month on the first and fifteenth of the lunar calendar. When bhikshus are present in a place where bhikshunis are, the bhikshunis must follow along with the recitation of the precepts by the bhikshus. They cannot recite the precepts themselves and take personal offerings. If they don’t accord with this method, they

violate this precept of not following. These are the eight parajikas for bhikshunis.

But even for people who have committed such serious violations, **"such heavy karma as this will disperse after they recite this Mantra like a sand dune that is scattered in a gale, so that not a particle remains."** Even the Five Rebellious Acts and the Four and Eight Parajikas can be blown away by the recitation of the Mantra, just as a strong wind blows away a sand dune so that it totally disappears. Not a hair's breadth of offense remains. This again shows the inconceivable power of the Shurangama Mantra.

Q6 Quick certification to non-production.

Sutra:

"Ananda, if living beings who have never repented and reformed any of the obstructive offenses, either heavy or light, that they have committed throughout countless kalpas past, up to and including those of this very life, can nevertheless read, recite, copy, or write out this mantra or wear it on their bodies or place it in their homes or in their garden houses, then all that accumulated karma will melt away like snow in hot water. Before long they will obtain awakening to patience with the non-production of dharmas.

Commentary:

"Ananda, if living beings who have never repented and reformed any of the obstructive offenses, either heavy or light, that they have committed throughout countless kalpas past, up to and including those of this very life": they have never had an opportunity to repent of them and reform. "Repent" means to be sorry about one's former offenses. "Reform" means to change so one does not commit the errors again. "They **can nevertheless read** the Shurangama Mantra, or **recite** it, **copy** it out, **or write** it **out**," Reciting of the Mantra must be done over a long term. The Buddha isn't talking about reciting it once or twice. He means over and over for a very long time. "**Or** they **wear it on their bodies.** When you

carry the Mantra on your body, you want to wear it above your heart, not below. To wear it above your heart represents respect; if you carry it on the lower part of your body, you are not showing proper respect for the Mantra. Not only is there no merit in that, you are actually committing offenses. If you are not respectful to the Mantra itself, then the efficacy of the Mantra is depleted with regard to you. "**Or** they **place it in their homes or in their garden houses. Then all that accumulated karma** from the offenses committed in life after life, as mentioned above, **will melt away like snow in hot water.**" The offenses will disappear just that quickly. **"Before long they will attain awakening to patience with the non-production of dharmas."**

P3 Answers all kinds of wishes.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Ananda, if women who do not have children and want to conceive can sincerely memorize and recite this mantra or carry the mantra, Syi Dan Dwo Bwo Da La, on their bodies, they can give birth to sons or daughters endowed with blessings, virtue, and wisdom.

Commentary:

"Moreover, Ananda," the Buddha continues, **"if women who do not have children and want to conceive" –** suppose there are women who would like to be mothers. They would like to get pregnant. "If they **can sincerely memorize and recite this mantra or carry the mantra, Syi Dan Dwo Bwo Da La, on their bodies, they can give birth to sons or daughters endowed with blessings, virtue, and wisdom."** "Sincerely" means single-mindedly; it means to reach the ultimate point of sincere regard. Perhaps they can remember it or use the book to recite the Shurangama Mantra. Or perhaps they request a High Master endowed with virtue in the Way to copy out for them the Heart of the Mantra, **Syi Dan Dwo Bwo Da La,** and they carry that on their bodies. This phrase of the Mantra means a Great White Canopy, whether you wear the syllables on your person or are mindful of

them in your mind, a great, white canopy spreads out in the air above you and protects you. It can fulfill all your wishes. If these women do these things, their wishes can be fulfilled, and quite soon in response to their sincerity they will have children with blessings, virtue, and wisdom. If they want sons, they will get sons, if they want daughters, they will get daughters.

Sutra:

"Those who seek long life will obtain long life. Those who seek to quickly perfect their reward will quickly gain perfection. The same is true for those who seek something regarding their bodies, their lives, their appearance, or their strength.

Commentary:

"Those who recite the Shurangama Mantra and seek long life will obtain long life. They will get that reward. Those who seek to quickly perfect their reward, whatever good reward it might be they want, will quickly gain perfection." For instance, if a woman hopes to have a good husband in the future, that's a kind of good reward. And she can attain it. The same applies to men. The meaning is that whatever you seek you can have. It's said,

Those who seek wealth and honor,
get wealth and honor.
Those who seek long life,
obtain long life.
Those who seek sons,
get sons;
Those who seek daughters,
get daughters.

No matter what it is, you can have your wishes fulfilled and have everything be as you would like it. **"The same is true for those who seek something regarding their bodies, their lives, their appearances, or their strength."** Whatever they seek on behalf of

these things, they will obtain it, in the same way one seeks and obtains long life, and the like.

Sutra:

"At the end of their lives, they will gain the rebirth they hope for in whichever of the countries of the ten directions they wish. They certainly will not be born in poorly endowed places, or as inferior people; even less will they be reborn in some odd form.

Commentary:

"At the end of their lives, they will gain the rebirth they hope for in whichever of the countries of the ten directions they wish." If you want to be reborn in the East and come before Akshobhya Buddha, or in the West and meet Amitabha Buddha, or in the North, or in the South – it's up to you – you can be reborn in the country of whichever Buddha you would like to draw near to. **"They certainly will not be born in poorly endowed places, or as inferior people."** "poorly endowed" refers to places where the land is not rich and the people are not educated. If one can recite the Shurangama Mantra, one will not be born in such places; **"Even less will they be reborn in some odd form."** As a person, you will not have an inferior rebirth; even less will you be reborn as an animal.

O2 Apparent universal benefit to the land.
P1 All difficulties disappear.

Sutra:

"Ananda, if there is famine or plague in a country, province, or village, or if perhaps there are armed troops, brigands, invasions, war, or any other kind of local threat or danger, one can write out this spiritual mantra and place it on the four city gates, or on a chaitya or on a dhvaja, and instruct all the people of the country to gaze upon the mantra, to make obeisance to it, to revere it, and to single-mindedly make offerings to it; one can instruct all the citizens to wear it on their bodies or to place it in

their homes; and then all such disasters and calamities will completely disappear.

Commentary:

"Ananda, if there is famine or plague in a country, province, or village" – this means any country at all, whether as large as an entire continent, or as small as a local area or village. In time of famine, there may have been drought, so that nothing will grow, or at the other extreme there may have been a torrential rain which drowns the crops. When a plague strikes, a violent contagious disease spreads among the population and is fatal if contracted. **"Or if perhaps there are armed troops, brigands, invasions, war, or any other kind of local threat or danger –** in any of these places where there are such difficulties **– one can write out this spiritual mantra and place it on the four city gates, or on a chaitya."** They can place it on the archway above the gates. "Chaitya" is a Sanskrit word for pagoda, a place which houses the relics of a Buddha or Sage. **"Or,** they can place it **on a dhvaja."** "Dhvaja" is a Sanskrit word for "banner." Perhaps the Mantra is written on a flag and flown high above the city from a watchtower or flagpole. **"And** one **instructs all the people of the country to gaze upon the Mantra, to make obeisance to it, to revere it, and to single-mindedly make offerings to it. One can instruct all the citizens** of the country **to wear it on their bodies or to place it in their homes."** People can carry the Mantra on their person or put a copy of it in the places where they live, **"and then all such disasters and calamities will completely disappear."** All these misfortunes and evil events will be done away with. The merit and virtue of the Shurangama Mantra is inconceivable. You can't imagine it or think about it; that's where the wonder of it lies.

Some people think that cultivation can consist of nothing but meditation, and so they don't study the Sutras. But that is a mistake. Others may think merely reciting mantras and studying the Sutras will work and that they don't need to meditate. That's also not the right way. Some may hear how efficacious and powerful mantras

are, so they merely recite mantras and do not cultivate in other ways. This is also behavior that is too extreme. In cultivation, no matter what Dharma you cultivate, you must find the Middle Way. Don't get carried away. On the other hand, don't fail to go far enough. Too much is the same as not enough. True enough, mantras are efficacious, but you must also develop your samadhi power. This Sutra stresses that the Mantra is efficacious, but the most essential point as far as cultivation is concerned is its teaching of the Dharma door of turning the hearing back to hear the self-nature – the Dharma door of the perfect penetration of the organ of the ear. So even when you recite mantras, you should be turning the hearing back to hear the self nature. You should return the light and illumine within.

When you recite the Mantra, the Mantra is one's mind and one's mind is the Mantra. The two cannot be separated. The mind and the Mantra are two and yet not two. Although they are two, they become one. If you can become like that, then whatever you want will be as you wish. You will certainly be able to accomplish what you set out to do. If the Mantra and your mind unite as one, then you will obtain the samadhi of Ch'an. This is something that everyone should be aware of.

P2 The people experience plenty and happiness.

Sutra:

"Ananda, in each and every country where the people accord with this mantra, the heavenly dragons are delighted, the winds and rains are seasonal, the crops are abundant, and the people are peaceful and happy.

Commentary:

"Ananda, in each and every country where the people accord with this mantra, the heavenly dragons are delighted." No matter what country it may be, if the Shurangama Mantra is there, the heavenly dragons are pleased, and **"the winds and rains are seasonal."** There are no hurricanes or floods which bring harm

and destruction. **“The crops are abundant.”** There are plentiful harvests of the five grains. “The people are peaceful and happy.

P3 Evil omens do not manifest.

Sutra:

“It can also suppress all evil stars which may appear in any of the directions and transform themselves in uncanny ways. Calamities and obstructions will not arise. People will not die accidentally or unexpectedly, nor will they be bound by fetters, cangues, or locks. Day and night they will be at peace, and no evil dreams will disturb their sleep.

Commentary:

This passage tells how they will not have the difficulty of evil dreams, either. **“It also can suppress all evil stars.”** The Mantra can control the influence of ill-omened stars. This is just like a person of genuine wisdom ruling a country in such a way that there are no rebels; all the bad people reform, and all matters are conducted with ease. When one person endowed with virtue in the Way is the leader, an entire country of people of lesser endowment will willingly follow. They will heed his wisdom. Here, the Mantra is analogous to the virtuous leader. It can control all inauspicious events. The “evil stars” represent unlucky affairs. These bad stars **“may appear in any of the directions and transform themselves in uncanny ways.”** They can bring about terrible, cruel disasters. “But **calamities and obstructions will not arise. People will not die accidentally or unexpectedly.**” “Accidental” deaths are untimely, unlucky deaths such as fatal auto accidents, or airplane crashes, or drowning at sea, or deaths by burning. The passage refers to anything that causes people to die when they don’t want to, when they aren’t prepared. “Unexpected deaths” refers to the death of children. Any death before one is thirty years old is considered unexpected, because one has not lived out one’s proper lifespan. **“Nor will they be bound by fetters, cangues, or locks. Day and night they will be at peace, and no evil dreams will disturb their sleep.”** No ghosts will come to bully you.

Sutra:

"Ananda, this Saha World has eighty-four thousand changeable and disastrous evil stars. Twenty-eight great evil stars are the leaders, and of these, eight great evil stars are the rulers. They take various shapes, and when they appear in the world they bring disaster and weird happenings upon living beings.

Commentary:

"Ananda, this Saha World has eighty-four thousand changeable and disastrous evil stars." There are uncountably many evil stars connected with this world we live in. **"Twenty-eight great evil stars are the leaders."** Although these twenty-eight are evil, they can also be good. In China, twenty-eight constellations which rule the four directions are spoken of, with seven constellations in each direction. In Chinese astrology, these constellations rule all divisions of time, even down to the days and hours. One cycle takes twenty-eight days, the typical lunar month. If a person is good, then the-evil stars change to good ones. If the people of a certain place are evil, however, then even the good stars can change to evil ones. So it's not that the stars are inherently evil or good; it's that they respond to the influence of karmic retribution and manifest in good or evil ways. Here they are referred to as evil to show that the Shurangama Mantra can dissolve all calamities and difficulties. Thus, the Sutra takes the position at this point that all the stars are evil – that all are inauspicious. If the stars are inauspicious and you as a person don't have any great good roots or any virtuous conduct to your benefit, then of course the whole situation becomes even more inauspicious. But if you can recite the

Shurangama Mantra, then even inauspicious events can change to auspicious ones. The twenty-eight are:

二十八宮

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
1 角 jue	2 亢 kang	3 氐 di	4 房 fang	5 心 xin	6 尾 wei	7 箕 ji
8 斗 dou	9 牛 niu	10 女 nu	11 虛 xu	12 危 wei	13 室 shi	14 壁 bi
15 奎 kui	16 婁 lou	17 胃 wei	18 昴 mao	19 畢 bi	20 觜 zui	21 參 shen
22 井 jing	23 鬼 gui	24 柳 lu	24 星 xing	25 張 zhang	26 翼 yi	27 軫 zhan

"And of these, eight great evil stars are the rulers":

1. "Wood Star", Jupiter
2. "Fire Star", Mars
3. "Earth Star", Saturn
4. "Metal Star", Venus
5. "Water Star", Mercury
6. Rahu (North Node)
7. Ketu (South Node)
8. Comets

Some celestial bodies are terrible and ugly; some are elegant and beautiful to behold. During the change of dynasties in China, a comet appeared in the world. Actually, what was the comet? It was a child wearing a red nightshirt. It went about teaching children to sing. When all the children started singing, the country would come to an end. So it was that whenever the government was about to change hands and a new emperor was about to appear, this evil star would appear in the world. "Weird happenings" refers to things not ordinarily seen. Suddenly some special circumstance arises that is totally out of the ordinary, and always inauspicious. "Happenings"

means that things would change and be out of balance and not proper.

Sutra:

"But they will all be eradicated wherever there is the mantra. The boundaries will be secured for twelve yojanas around, and no evil calamity or misfortune will ever enter in.

Commentary:

"But they will all be eradicated – all inauspicious events calamities, and disasters – **wherever there is the Mantra" –** in every country where the Shurangama Mantra is known. **"The boundaries will be secured for twelve yojanas around."** One secures the boundaries by reciting the Mantra in a certain place. For instance, one recites the Shurangama Mantra while facing north, then east, then south, then west. In every direction that one faces while reciting, the boundaries are secured for a distance of twelve *yojanas*. A small yojana is forty Chinese miles (about thirteen English miles). "Twelve yojanas" here refers to great yojanas, or a total of ninety-six Chinese miles (thirty-two English miles). For that distance all around, the boundaries are secured. Within that range, the demons and weird creatures and ghosts are not permitted to cause accidents or catastrophes. They are not permitted to act up and make trouble. Beyond the thirty-six miles it is a different matter, but within them, **"no evil calamity or misfortune will ever enter in."** Thus, wherever the Shurangama Mantra is found, everyone in the area benefits. In the area where the boundaries are secured, no catastrophe, calamity, accident, or misfortune will be found

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M3 He makes clear with a general exhortation that cultivators will certainly certify.
N1 They will be protected and peaceful.

Sutra:

"Therefore, the Thus Come One proclaims this mantra as one which will protect those of the future who have just begun to study, as well as all cultivators, so that they can enter

samadhi, be peaceful in body and mind, and attain great tranquility.

Commentary:

“**Therefore, the Thus Come One,** Shakyamuni Buddha, **proclaims** the Shurangama **Mantra as** the Mantra **which will protect those of the future.”** That refers to us in the present. He says that this Mantra “will protect those in the future **who have just begun to study, as well as all cultivators so that they can enter samadhi.** They will obtain samadhi-power, **be peaceful in body and mind, and attain great tranquillity.**” They will be calm and free from troubles.

N2 They will be far apart from demons and enemies.

Sutra:

“Even less will any demon, ghost, or spirit, or any enemy, calamity, or misfortune due from former lives that reach back to beginningless time, or any old karma or past debts come to vex and harm them.

Commentary:

“Even less will any demon, ghost, or spirit, or any enemy, calamity, or misfortune due from former lives that reach back to beginningless time” come to bother one who holds this mantra. Misfortunes due from a former life refer to offenses one created for which one should undergo a retribution. This also is true for **any old karma**, that is, for deeds done in former lives – karmic obstacles one has created **or past debts** one owes. For instance, if one has killed a person, one should have to pay back with one’s own life. If one eats another’s flesh, one has to pay back with one’s own flesh. All these debts have to be paid off. But if one can recite and uphold the Shurangama Mantra, these misfortunes due from old karma and past unpaid debts will not **come to vex and harm** one. Nothing can get at you.

N3 They will not commit four violations.
N4 They must keep their minds on their recitation.

Sutra:

"As to you and everyone in the assembly who is still studying, and as to cultivators of the future who rely on my platform, hold the precepts in accord with the dharma, receive the precepts from pure members of the Sangha, and hold this mantra-heart without giving rise to doubts: should such good men as these not obtain mind-penetration in that very body born of their parents, then the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions have lied!"

Commentary:

"As to you, Ananda, **and everyone in the assembly who is still studying, and as to cultivators of the future:"** that includes all of us of the present time. "If all of these **rely on my platform –** if they establish platforms in accord with the method I have described – **and hold the precepts in accord with the Dharma**; if they **receive the precepts from pure members of the Sangha – they meet members of the Sangha** who are pure and who have not violated the precepts; and if they **hold this mantra-heart without giving rise to doubts –** they do not have even the slightest doubt about the Shurangama Mantra: **should such good men as these** rely on my method to cultivate, establish the platform, and meet a pure bhikshu from whom they receive the complete precepts – if such are their causes and conditions; then if **in that very body born of their parents**, they **do not obtain the mind-penetration –** that is, if they don't become enlightened and obtain the five eyes and six spiritual penetrations – **then the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions have lied!** Then the Buddhas of the ten directions are not telling the truth.

I3 The assembly vows to protect it.
J1 The outer assembly protects and holds it.
K1 The multitude of vajra power-knights.

Sutra:

When he finished this explanation, measureless hundreds of thousands of vajra power-knights in the assembly came before the Buddha, placed their palms together, bowed, and said, "With sincere hearts we will protect those who cultivate Bodhi in this way, according to what the Buddha has said."

Commentary:

When he, Shakyamuni Buddha, **finished this explanation, measureless hundreds of thousands of Vajra Power-Knights in the assembly came before the Buddha, placed their palms together, bowed, and said to the Buddha, "with sincere hearts we will protect those who cultivate Bodhi in this way, according to what the Buddha has said**, according to this Dharma-door. We will guard all the sincere good people who are cultivating like this to attain the Bodhi Way."

K2 The venerable hosts of gods.

Sutra:

Then the Brahma King, the God Shakra, and the four great heavenly kings all came before the Buddha, made obeisance together, and said to the Buddha, "If indeed there be good men who cultivate and study in this way, we will do all we can to earnestly protect them and cause everything to be as they would wish throughout their entire lives."

Commentary:

Then the Brahma King, the Lord of the Great Brahma Heaven, **the God Shakra,** Lord God, **and the Four Great Heavenly Kings also came before the Buddha.** They all stood up together and then **made obeisance together** to the Buddha, **and said to the Buddha, "If indeed there be good men who cultivate and study in this say, we will do all we can to earnestly protect them and cause**

everything to be as they would wish throughout their entire lives. If there really are people who cultivate as you have described just now, Buddha, then with the fullest measure of our sincerity, we will guard and protect them and fulfill their wishes."

K3 The host of the eight divisions.

Sutra:

Moreover measureless great yaksha generals, rakshasa kings, putana kings, kumbhanda kings, pishacha kings, vinayaka, the great ghost kings, and all the ghost commanders came before the Buddha, put their palms together, and made obeisance. "We also have vowed to protect these people and cause their resolve for Bodhi to be quickly perfected."

Commentary:

Moreover measureless great yaksha generals, the "speedy" ghosts; **rakshasa kings,** the "terrifying" ghosts which are full of devious tricks; **putana kings,** the "bad-smelling" ghosts which cause fevers; **kumbhanda kings,** the "barrel-shaped" ghosts which paralyze people; **pishacha** are another horrible kind of ghost; **Vinayaka,** the scary, ugly Dharma protector; **the great ghost kings; and all the ghost commanders came before the Buddha, put their palms together, and made obeisance. "We also have vowed to protect these people and cause their resolve for Bodhi to be quickly perfected."**

K4 The ruling assembly of illumining bodies.

Sutra:

Further, measureless numbers of gods of the sun and moon, lords of the rain, lords of the clouds, lords of thunder, lords of lightning who patrol throughout the year, and all the retinues of stars which were also in the assembly bowed at the Buddha's feet and said to the Buddha, "We also protect all cultivators, so that their Bodhimandas are peaceful and they attain fearlessness."

Commentary:

Further, measureless numbers of gods of the sun and moon, lords of the rain, lords of the clouds, lords of thunder, lords of lightning who patrol throughout the year – most people don't realize that for every year there is a governor who monitors the events that take place during it – **and all the retinues of stars which were also in the assembly –** each star has its retinue – **bowed at the Buddha's feet and said to the Buddha, "We also protect all cultivators, so that their Bodhi minds are peaceful and they attain fearlessness."** We've also made vows to protect people who cultivate. We set ourselves up in their Bodhimanda and help them be unafraid. They attain the power of fearlessness.

K5 The deities and spirits of the earth.

Sutra:

Moreover, measureless numbers of mountain spirits, sea-spirits, and all those of the earth – the myriad creatures and essences of water, land, and the air – as well as the king of wind spirits and the gods of the Formless Heavens, came before the Thus Come One, bowed their heads, and said to the Buddha, "We also will protect these cultivators until they attain Bodhi and will never let any demons have their way with them."

Commentary:

Moreover, measureless numbers of mountain-spirits, sea-spirits, and all those of the earth – the myriad creatures and essences of water, land, and the air – all these spirits, too – as well as the King of the wind-spirits and the gods of the Formless Heavens, came before the Thus Come One, bowed their heads, and said to the Buddha, simultaneously making obeisance to the Buddha, **"We also will protect these cultivators until they attain Bodhi and will never let any demons have their way with them."** We will protect them right up to the time they attain Bodhi and will never let anything demonic happen to them.

J2 The inner sages protect and hold it.
K1 They reveal their origin and their long-term protection.

Sutra:

Then Vajra-Treasury-King Bodhisattvas in the great assembly, numbering as many as eighty-four thousand nayutas of kotis' worth of sands in the Ganges, arose from their seats, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, the nature of our deeds in cultivation is such that, although we have long since accomplished Bodhi, we do not grasp at Nirvana, but always accompany those who hold this mantra, rescuing and protecting those in the final age who cultivate samadhi properly.

Commentary:

Then Vajra-Treasury-King Bodhisattvas in the Great Assembly, numbering as many as eighty-four thousand nayutas of kotis – that is, as many hundreds of millions **– worth of sands in the Ganges, arose from their seats, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha,**

"World Honored One, the nature of our deeds in cultivation is such that, although we have long since accomplished Bodhi, we do not grasp at Nirvana, but always accompany those who hold this Mantra. The merit and virtue of our cultivation is such that we already realized Bodhi long ago; we have been certified. So why don't we enter Nirvana? We always accompany those who hold this Mantra. We are intent upon **rescuing and protecting those in the Final Age who cultivate samadhi properly.** Those who genuinely practice Ch'an samadhi will be guarded and protected by us."

K2 They assert their protection and maintaining.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, such people as this, who cultivate their minds and seek proper concentration, whether in the bodhimanda or walking about, and even such people who with

scattered minds roam and play in the villages, will be accompanied and protected by us and our retinue of followers.

Commentary:

The Vajra-Treasury-King Bodhisattvas continue speaking to the Buddha: **"World Honored One, such people as this, who cultivate their minds and seek proper concentration –** who want to obtain genuine samadhi power **– whether in the Bodhimanda or walking about"**: cultivators sit in meditation and apply effort, but when they get up and walk about, they are still applying effort. When they sit, they develop the skill of dhyana samadhi. When they get up, they cultivate the samadhi of reciting and holding, either by reciting mantras or being mindful of the Buddha. **"And even such people who with scattered minds roam and play in the villages."** The Vajra-Treasury-King Bodhisattvas even protect cultivators who are not cultivating samadhi, are not in the Bodhimanda, and are not walking about reciting. Actually, though, even if you're on a holiday to another place, you can still hold the Mantra. But even if you get scattered, the Vajra Treasury-King Bodhisattvas say, "you **will be accompanied and protected by us and our retinue of followers.**" If you are one who recites and upholds the Shurangama Mantra, and if you have some skill, if you can make it function, then eighty-four thousand Vajra-Treasury-King Bodhisattvas and their entire retinue of followers will accompany and protect you wherever you go, just as troops protect their generals. When you enter a room, there will be guards at the door protecting you.

Sutra:

"Although the demon kings and the god of great comfort will seek to get at them, they will never be able to do so. The smaller ghosts will have to stay ten yojanas' distance from these good people, except for those beings who have decided they want to cultivate dhyana.

Commentary:

"Although the demon kings and the God of Great Comfort will seek to get at them, they will never be able to do so." They will look for a way in, they will look for a hole, so that they can give the cultivators trouble. But they will not be able to bother them. And **"the smaller ghosts will have to stay ten yojanas' distance from these good people."** Since the demon kings and the God of the Heaven of Great Comfort are unable to disturb them, the little ghosts and spirits will have to behave even more properly. They will have to stay 275 miles away, **"except for those beings who have decided they want to cultivate dhyana."** The only exception is those ghosts who have brought forth the resolve to listen to the Sutras, hear the Dharma, and to cultivate Ch'an samadhi. Beings like that can participate in the Bodhimanda and the Dharma assemblies and can listen to the Sutras if they want to. If they don't want to do those things, they must stay 275 miles away.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, if such evil demons or their retinues want to harm or disturb these good people, we will smash their heads to smithereens with our vajra pestles. We will always help these people to accomplish what they want."

Commentary:

Would you say the Dharma-protecting Vajra-Treasury Bodhisattvas are fierce? They say they will smash the heads of demons into fine motes of dust. Can you imagine how much strength that would take? I'll tell you, however, that there is no need for the Vajra-pestles of the Vajra-Treasury Bodhisattvas to come in actual contact with the heads of the demons at all. They don't need to really strike a blow in order to smash their heads to smithereens. All they have to do is have the thought to do it, and the deed is accomplished. That's because the strength of the samadhi of the Vajra-Treasury Bodhisattvas is sufficient to obliterate everything that exists. So they call out again, **"World Honored One, if such**

evil demons or their retinues want to harm or disturb these good people, we will smash their heads to smithereens with our Vajra pestles. We will always help these people to accomplish what they want.” Just such demons as those mentioned here are behind the brawls and strikes and revolts, the cases of arson, murder, and theft in every major city in the world today. Demon kings stir up these troubles invisibly. Most people don’t know that but someone who has cultivated the Buddhadharma to the point that he or she has genuine samadhi-power – someone with good roots who has opened the Buddha Eye – can verify that this is so. The problem is that the dharma-tricks of the demons have a lot of power behind them. They pack more of a wallop than the Buddhadharma, in that one must cultivate the Dharma for a long, long time – three, five, ten, twenty years – before one obtains a little advantage. But the demons’ tricks are mastered very swiftly. They can cultivate and obtain tremendous psychic powers, and they abound throughout the world, causing unrest and instigating trouble. However, if you can recite the Shurangama Mantra, then all the demons throughout the world are forced to behave to some extent. If no one can recite the Shurangama Mantra, they will run rampant. They will recklessly devastate this world.

CHAPTER 4

The Two Upside-down Causes

F4 He explains certification to the position of dhyana causing him to dwell in complete samadhi and tend straight toward bodhi.
G1 Ananda is grateful for the instruction and asks about the position.

Sutra:

Then Ananda arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "Now that we who are stupid and slow, who are fond of erudition but have not sought to cease the outflows of our minds, have received the Buddha's compassionate instructions and have attained the proper means to become infused with cultivation, we experience joy in body and mind and obtain tremendous benefit.

Commentary:

Then Ananda arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "Now that we who are stupid and slow, that is, those of us in the assembly who still must study and must rely on our memories, **who are fond of erudition but have not sought to cease the outflows of our minds**: we like to read, to study, and to memorize. We are quite clever at that. But as to the outflows of our thoughts and actions, we have not sought to get rid of them. We have not decided we want to transcend the triple realm. We are not concerned about getting out of the burning house. Now

that we **have received the Buddha's compassionate instructions and have attained the proper means to become infused with cultivation, we experience joy in body and mind and obtain tremendous benefit.** The Buddha has now taught us the genuine Dharma-methods that we should cultivate and steep ourselves in. This makes us very happy. It's been of great benefit to us.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, for one who cultivates in this way and is certified as having attained the Buddha's samadhi, but who has not yet reached Nirvana, what is meant by the level of 'dry wisdom'? What are the 'forty-four minds'? What is the sequence in which one cultivates till one reaches one's goal? What place must one reach to be said to have 'entered the grounds'? And what is meant by a Bodhisattva of 'equal enlightenment'?"

Commentary:

"World Honored One, for one who cultivates in this way and is certified as having attained the Buddha's samadhi, but who has not yet reached Nirvana, what is meant by the level of 'dry wisdom'? Buddha, we cultivate in this way until we are certified to the fruition and give proof to the Buddha's samadhi-power. But before we reach Nirvana, there are many levels to pass through. What is the level of 'dry wisdom, for example? **What are the 'Forty-four Minds'? What is the sequence in which one cultivates till one reaches one's goal? What place must one reach to be said to have entered the grounds?** How do we know when we reach the level of the Tenth-Ground Bodhisattva? **And what is meant by a Bodhisattva of 'Equal Enlightenment'?"** Since all these terms are going to be explained in the subsequent passages, we will not go into them here.

Sutra:

Having said this, he made a full prostration, and then the great assembly single-mindedly awaited the sound of the

Buddha's compassionate voice as they gazed up unblinking with respectful admiration.

Commentary:

After Ananda had **said this, he made a full prostration.** He and everyone in the great assembly placed their five limbs – their head, arms, and legs – on the ground in full obeisance. **And then the great assembly single-mindedly awaited the sound of the Buddha's compassionate voice as they gazed up unblinking with respectful admiration.** They gazed with such fixed intensity that it was as if they could not see. They waited expectantly for the Buddha to speak. What do you suppose the Buddha is going to say?

G2 The Thus Come One answers with instruction in the arisal of conditions.
H1 The Thus Come One offers to speak and the great assembly waits to hear.

Sutra:

At that time the World Honored One praised Ananda, saying, "Good indeed, good indeed, that you can for the sake of the entire great assembly and those beings in the final age who cultivate samadhi and seek the great vehicle, ask to have explained and revealed the unsurpassed proper path of cultivation that takes one from the level of an ordinary person to final Parinirvana. Listen attentively, and I will speak about it for you." Ananda and everyone in the assembly placed their palms together, cleansed their minds, and silently waited to receive the teaching.

Commentary:

At that time refers to the period when the great assembly was gazing up unblinkingly with respectful admiration. **The World Honored One praised Ananda.** He perceived how sincere Ananda and the great assembly were, so he praised him **saying, "Good indeed, good indeed,** you are certainly a good person. **You can for the sake of the entire great assembly and those beings of the final age…** It is excellent that you who still have something left to study can seek for the sake of everyone and not just for yourselves.

You are not being selfish or seeking self-benefit in doing this. You are doing it for everyone assembled here and also for beings to come in the future who cultivate samadhi and who want to practice the Great Vehicle dharmas of benefiting themselves and benefiting others, and so you **ask to have explained and revealed the unsurpassed proper path of cultivation that takes one from the level of an ordinary person to final Parinirvana.** Nirvana is the fruition where there is neither production nor extinction. You haven't arrived at it yet, but you wish to know about the proper way to get there. **Listen attentively, and I will speak about it for you.** Pay close attention. I am willing to explain it for you."

Ananda and everyone in the assembly placed their palms together, cleansed their minds, and silently waited to receive the teaching. "Cleansed their minds" means that they cast out their extraneous thoughts, the false thinking of their conscious mind – their mad mind and wild nature. They got rid of the five quick causes,

1. the point of view of a body,
2. prejudiced views,
3. the point of view of unbeneficial precepts,
4. opinionated views, and
5. deviant views,

as well as the five slow causes,

1. greed,
2. hatred,
3. stupidity,
4. pride, and
5. doubt.

Just as one hollows out a log to make a boat, they hollowed out their minds so that they could receive the teaching. At this point no one spoke. They were silent as they waited for Shakyamuni Buddha to begin his explanation.

H2 The true suchness which is relied upon is the source of the dharma.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, "Ananda, you should know that the wonderful nature is perfect and bright, apart from all names and appearances. Basically there is no world, nor are there any living beings.

Commentary:

The Buddha said, "Ananda, you should know that the wonderful nature is perfect and bright. The Buddha nature, the self-nature, the bright nature of enlightenment – all refer to this wonderful nature which is **apart from all names and appearances."** As the *Vajra Sutra* puts it,

> *Whatever has an appearance is empty and false. If one sees all appearances as having no appearance, one sees the Thus Come One.*

But you can't get rid of appearances. Whatever you see you become attached to. That's why there are appearances. Basically there are no appearances in the wonderful nature. Nor are there any names. Why aren't there any names or appearances? **"Basically there is no world, nor are there any living beings."** Only because one gives rise to delusion and creates karma is there a world in which living beings undergo retribution.

Sutra:

"Because of falseness, there is production. Because of production, there is extinction. The names 'production' and 'extinction' are false.

Commentary:

"Because of falseness, there is production. Because of production, there is extinction. If there were no production, there would be no extinction. **The names 'production and 'extinction'**

are false. Production after production, extinction after extinction are all created from falseness; there is no reality to them.

Sutra:

"When the false is extinguished, there is truth, which is called the Thus Come One's Unsurpassed Bodhi and Great Nirvana: those are names for two kinds of turning around.

Commentary:

"When the false is extinguished, there is truth." When your truth reaches the true suchness of the self-nature, you have reached the Buddha-nature, **"Which is called the Thus Come One's Unsurpassed Bodhi and Great Nirvana; those are names for two kinds of turning around."** One turns afflictions into Bodhi; one turns birth and death into Nirvana.

H3 Defiled conditions arise and become the turning wheel.
I1 He exhorts Ananda to recognize two causes for being upside down.

Sutra:

"Ananda, you now wish to cultivate true samadhi and arrive directly at the Thus Come One's parinirvana. First, you should recognize the two upside-down causes of living beings and the world. If this upside-down state is not produced, then there is the Thus Come One's true samadhi.

Commentary:

"Ananda, you now wish to cultivate true samadhi and arrive directly at the Thus Come One's Parinirvana. You want to cultivate the Great Bodhisattva's Dharma and obtain genuine samadhi-power. You want to go right to the Buddha's position and obtain the Four Virtues of Nirvana: permanence, bliss, true self, and purity. **First, you should recognize the two upside-down causes of living beings and the world. If this upside-down state is not produced, then there is the Thus Come One's true samadhi.** To be able to recognize these inversions and to avoid giving rise to them, is the true samadhi of the Buddha.

I2 He clarified the two causes for being upside down, in detail.
J1 He makes it clear that living beings are upside down.
K1 From the true they give rise to the false.

Sutra:

"Ananda, what is meant by the upside-down state of living beings? Ananda, the reason that the nature of the mind is bright is that the nature itself is the perfection of brightness. By adding brightness, another nature arises, and from that false nature, views are produced, so that from absolute nothingness comes ultimate existence.

Commentary:

"Ananda, what is meant by the upside-down state of living beings? Ananda, the reason that the nature of the mind is bright is that the nature itself is the perfection of brightness." The basic nature is perfectly bright and illumines all appearances. But **"by adding brightness, another nature arises."** By adding brightness to the inherent brightness of the self nature, another nature comes into being – that of karmic obstructions. This is because from the true the false arises. Based in the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, one gives rise to ignorance. Another way of putting it is that one tries to add brightness to enlightenment when all along the nature of enlightenment is brightness itself. In that one movement of the false thought to add light to brightness, the Appearance of Karma is created, the first of the Three Subtle Appearances.

"And from that false nature, views are produced." This is the Appearance of Turning. Originally there was the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, but now ignorance has arisen. Ignorance is a kind of delusion, and once there is delusion, a lack of clarity, then karma arises. The nature of that karma is false, and from it views arise. Birth and death come into being.

From a single unenlightened thought the
Three Subtle Appearances arise.

Then external states become the conditions
for the arising of the Six Coarse Appearances.

This concept was also discussed earlier in the Sutra. When falseness arises from within the truth, then the Appearance of Karma is produced. With the Appearance of Karma, there comes the Appearance of Turning. First one gives rise to delusion, but then one creates karma and after that must undergo a retribution. So the last is the Appearance of Manifestation. These are the Three Subtle Appearances:

1. the Appearance of Karma;
2. the Appearance of Turning;
3. the Appearance of Manifestation.

From this process, a great deal of confusion arises, which extends itself into Six Coarse Appearances:

1. the Appearance of Knowing, which refers to worldly knowledge;
2. the Appearance of Continuation, in which things go on and on without cease;
3. the Appearance of Attaching and Grasping;
4. the Appearance of Reckoning Names
5. the Appearance of the Arising of Karma;
6. the Appearance of the Suffering of Being Bound by Karma.

"So that from absolute nothingness comes ultimate existence." That is the third Subtle Appearance, that of manifestation. Because of the falseness, existence comes into being.

Sutra:

"All that exists comes from this; every cause in fact has no cause. Subjective reliance on objective appearances is basically groundless. Thus, upon what is fundamentally unreliable, one sets up the world and living beings.

Commentary:

"All that exists comes from this." "This" refers to ignorance, because:

> *From a single unenlightened thought the*
> *Three Subtle Appearances arise.*
> *Then external states become the conditions*
> *for the arising of the Six Coarse Appearances.*

"All that exists," then, refers to these appearances. Yet, **"every cause in fact has no cause."** "Cause" here refers to a place of reliance. Why is there said to be no cause? It is because, although the Three Subtle Appearances are said to arise from ignorance, ignorance is not really dependable. It is not a true place of reliance. Ignorance itself is a false creation, an empty appearance. Therefore, although it seems to be that the Three Subtle Appearances arise out of ignorance, it doesn't really happen that way, because ignorance itself doesn't even exist' Since ignorance doesn't have any substance of itself, how can the Three Subtle Appearances arise from it? **"Subjective reliance on objective appearances is basically groundless."** Living beings are the subjective aspect that relies on ignorance, the objective aspect. But basically there is no foundation in this. There is really no source. **"Thus, upon what is fundamentally unreliable, one sets up the world and living beings."** Basically there is nothing to be depended on, but it is on this unreliable ignorance that the world is established. Out of what is empty, false, and unreal the world is set up, and with it all living beings. Their very existence is empty and false; there is nothing real about it.

K2 They confuse their origin so it is difficult to return.

Sutra:

"Confusion about one's basic, perfect understanding results in the arising of falseness. The nature of falseness is devoid of substance; it is not something which can be relied upon.

Commentary:

"Confusion about one's basic, perfect understanding results in the arising of falseness." "Confusion" refers to the arising of falseness out of truth. Basically there is no name or appearance in the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. But when ignorance is produced, confusion results. Since one is confused, one no longer recognizes one's inherent enlightened nature. Once that happens, it is as if one has lost one's home. Then falseness arises. **"The nature of falseness is devoid of substance; it is not something which can be relied upon."** Although falseness arises out of truth, falseness itself doesn't have any substance. It came out of truth, but it is merely illusory. Since ignorance doesn't have a substance of its own, the Three Subtle Appearances cannot really be based on it.

Sutra:

"One may wish to return to the truth, but that wish for the truth is already a falseness. The real nature of true suchness is not a truth that one can seek to return to. By doing so one misses the mark.

Commentary:

"One may wish to return to the truth, but that wish for the truth is already a falseness." Basically, ignorance has no substance of its own, and as a consequence the Three Subtle Appearances aren't really based on anything. Therefore, it is a mistake to decide that you want to "return to the truth," to go back to the source in order to seek for the truth. You've just given rise to more falseness. If you want to return to the truth, you should merely refrain from adding brightness to enlightenment; just don't add a head on top of a head. Don't go looking for a donkey while riding on a donkey. **"The real nature of true suchness is not a truth that one can seek to return to."** It's not that you decide to return to inherent truth. Rather, you simply dispense with ignorance; that itself is the truth. There's no need to seek further. The entire reason you do not grasp the truth is that you are possessed with ignorance.

If you discover that ignorance has no substance, then "you don't get rid of false thinking, and you don't seek the truth." All you have to do is destroy ignorance, and the Dharma nature manifests. **"By doing so one misses the mark."** Basically one does not have to seek truth or cut off falseness. All one has to do is smash through ignorance, and one's enlightened nature appears spontaneously. But if one does not smash through ignorance and yet seeks the truth, one is doing what is called "letting go of the root and grasping at the branches." The first step is to break through ignorance. When ignorance is destroyed, the Three Subtle Appearances also disappear, and so do the Six Coarse Appearances. How can one seek truth when one has not destroyed ignorance? If one tries to do it that way, one ends up with more false appearances.

K3 They produce karma which brings a retribution.

Sutra:

"What basically is not produced, what basically does not dwell, what basically is not the mind, and what basically are not dharmas arise through interaction. As they arise more and more strongly, they form the propensity to create karma. Similar karma sets up a mutual stimulus. Because of the karma thus generated, there is mutual production and mutual extinction. That is the reason for the upside-down state of living beings.

Commentary:

"What basically is not produced" refers to the ignorance which produces appearances. **"What basically does not dwell"** refers to karmic consciousness, which is to say the eighth consciousness. **"What basically is not the mind"** refers to the aspect of seeing. **"What basically are not dharmas"** refers to the aspect of appearances. Ignorance, karmic consciousness, and the aspects of seeing and appearances have no source and no substance of their own. Their very existence is illusory. Nonetheless, this sickness is contagious once it arises: that is what is meant by **"they arise through interaction."** It is the same as the interconnection of

the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. **"As they arise more and more strongly, they form the propensity to create karma."** Their continual arisal and transformation become powerful, and, so similarly, the karma they make increases. Ignorance, karmic consciousness, and the aspects of seeing and appearances aid one another; they borrow strength from one another. This interaction becomes stronger and stronger until, when it reaches its peak, they become fused and create karma. Karmic obstacles arise. **"Similar karma sets up a mutual stimulus. Because of the karma thus generated, there is mutual production and mutual extinction."** Because of this interconnection and mutual stimulation, production and extinction are created. **"That is the reason for the upside-down state of living beings."** That's how living beings come to be and how they give rise to inversions.

J2 He makes clear the world is upside down.
K1 He explains the meaning of the word world.

Sutra:

"Ananda, what is meant by the upside-down state of the world? All that exists comes from this; the world is set up because of the false arising of sections and shares. Every cause in fact has no cause; everything that is dependent has nothing on which it is dependent, and so it shifts and slides and is unreliable. Because of this, the world of the three periods of time and four directions comes into being. Their union and interaction bring about changes which result in the twelve categories of living beings.

Commentary:

"**Ananda, what is meant by the upside-down state of the world?** Ananda, I will explain the inversions of the world. You should listen to this. **All that exists comes from this.**" "This" refers to ignorance. "All that exists" refers to the physical bodies and faculties of living beings. **"The world is set up because of the false arising of sections and shares" –** of ignorance and living beings. "Sections" refers to the individual bodies of living beings.

"Shares" refers to their various lifespans. When beings give rise to ignorance, to an unenlightened thought, it is as if they have taken some drug which confuses them, or as if they had gotten drunk on too much wine. They no longer know what they should be doing. So they simply go along with their karma. Whatever karma they create, they undergo retribution for those deeds. This is why the world comes into being. **"Every cause in fact has no cause; everything that is dependent has nothing on which it is dependent, and so it shifts and slides and is unreliable."** Although ignorance is groundless and void, nonetheless it is the cause of this world. "No cause," then, refers to ignorance, which, being empty, cannot form a cause. And yet, illusory though it is, it gives rise to the world – "every cause." The world is empty, too, then, and since it is empty, it cannot be relied upon. And yet, it appears it can be relied upon. "Everything that is dependent has nothing on which it is dependent." Basically, the world is not something on which anything can be dependent, but because living beings give rise to false attachment and false emotion, they become something "that is dependent." This dependency is a manifestation of their karmic consciousness. But since the whole situation is basically empty, basically non-existent, basically causeless and unreliable, things "shift and slide and are unreliable." The entire circumstance is never-ending and always in a state of flux. **"Because of this, the world of the three periods of time and four directions comes into being."** All these influences combine to create the world. The world has three periods of time: past, present, and future. It also has four aspects of space: the four directions. **"Their union and interaction bring about changes which result in the twelve categories of living beings."** They borrow on one another's strength. The twelve categories of living beings will be discussed below.

K2 He shows its characteristic is constant flux.

Sutra:

"That is why, in this world, movement brings about sounds, sounds bring about forms, forms bring about smells, smells bring about contact, contact brings about tastes, and tastes bring about awareness of dharmas. The random false thinking resulting from these six creates karma, and this continuous revolving becomes the cause of twelve different categories.

Commentary:

"That is why, in this world, movement brings about sounds." Because of the appearance of movement, the defiling object of sounds arises. **Sounds bring about forms.** Once the defiling object of sounds exists, the defiling object of forms comes into being. **Forms bring about smells.** Forms influence the arising of smells. **Smells bring about contact, contact brings about tastes, and tastes bring about awareness of dharmas. The random false thinking resulting from these six creates karma.**" The "six" refer to forms, sounds, smells, tastes, contact, and dharmas. These six create scattered false thoughts and together they play tricks. They are a gang of thieves. They plunder and rob. They create karma. **"And this continuous revolving becomes the cause of twelve different categories."** The interactions of the six defiling organs make continuous karma, which divides into twelve distinct types. From this, beings undergo continual rebirth in the six Paths.

Sutra:

"And so, in the world, sounds, smells, tastes, contact, and the like, are each transformed through out the twelve categories to make one complete cycle.

Commentary:

"And so, in the world, sounds, smells, tastes, contact, and the like – that is, forms, sounds, smells, tastes, contacts, and dharmas – **are each transformed through out the twelve categories to make one complete cycle."** There is one change after

another as they go through the twelve categories, until a complete revolution is made.

These changes can be explained in two ways: first, each defiling sense-object relates to each category of beings, so that there are womb-born sounds, egg-born sounds, and so forth, up to and including womb-born dharmas, and egg-born dharmas. The other explanation is that each kind of being complete with the six faculties goes through each category of rebirth in a sequence, based on the weight of its particular karma. Thus if one's thinking is predominant, one becomes first an egg-born being, and so forth.

CHAPTER 5

The Twelve Categories of Living Beings

K3 He explains the retributions of the categories of beings.
L1 He lists the names of the categories of beings.

Sutra:

"The appearance of being upside down is based on this continuous process. Therefore, in the world there are those born from eggs, those born from wombs, those born from moisture, those born by transformation, those with form, those without form, those with thought, those without thought, those not totally endowed with form, those not totally lacking form, those not totally endowed with thought, and those not totally lacking thought.

Commentary:

"The appearance of being upside down is based on this continuous process. The mutual interaction of the six defiling objects and the twelve categories of living beings brings about the appearance of the upside-down state. **Therefore, in the world there are those born from eggs, those born from wombs, those born from moisture, those born by transformation."** These are four categories of birth. There are four conditions necessary for birth from an egg to occur:

1. the condition of a father;
2. the condition of a mother;
3. the condition of individual karma;
4. the condition of warmth.

There are three conditions necessary for birth from wombs to occur:

1. the condition of a father;
2. the condition of a mother;
3. the condition of individual karma

There are two conditions necessary for birth from moisture to occur:

1. the condition of individual karma,
2. the condition of moisture.

Birth by transformation needs only one condition,

1. the condition of individual karma.

Based on one's own karmic consciousness, one transforms as one wishes. One can appear and disappear at will. The next four categories of living beings are **"those with form, those without form, those with thought, those without thought, those not totally endowed with form" –** it's not that they have form, and yet it's not that they lack form, **those not totally lacking form, those not totally endowed with thought, and those not totally lacking thought.**" **–** it's not that they have thought, and yet it's not that they lack thought. These are the twelve categories of living beings. Because time is limited, each category cannot be described in great detail. A simple explanation will have to suffice.

L2 He explains the retributions of the categories of beings.
M1 A specific listing of the categories of beings.
N1 Egg-born.

Sutra:

"Ananda, through a continuous process of falseness, the upside-down state of movement occurs in this world. It unites with energy to become eighty four thousand kinds of random thoughts that either fly or sink. From this there come into being the egg kalalas which multiply throughout the lands in the form of fish, birds, amphibians, and reptiles, so that their kinds abound.

Commentary:

"Ananda, through a continuous process of falseness, the upside-down state of movement occurs in this world." We have learned that falseness arises out of truth, and that out of ignorance arise the Three Subtle and Six Coarse Appearances, which in turn become numerous empty false appearances. Within the turning cycle of rebirth this process goes on continuously. The arising of karma belongs to movement, so movement is a further creation of the upside-down state. **"It unites with energy to become eighty four thousand kinds of random thoughts that either fly or sink."** "Energy" refers to the karma that is created. "Thoughts that fly" refers to the category of birds and the like. "Thoughts that sink" refers to the category of reptiles and amphibians. "**From this –** because of all these scattered thoughts – **there come into being the egg kalalas.**" "Kalala" is a Sanskrit word that means "slippery coagulation"; it refers to the foetus resulting from the union of the male semen and female blood in its first week of development. Birth from an egg is a result of thought and the four conditions listed above. These kalalas **"multiply throughout the lands in the form of fish, birds, amphibians, and reptiles."** They multiply and spread everywhere. Fish swim in the water, birds fly in the air, and frogs, which can live both in and out of the water, are amphibians. Snakes and turtles belong to the reptile class. These kinds of beings

multiply "until **their kinds abound**." They spread throughout all the lands of the world.

N2 Womb-born.

Sutra:

"Through a continuous process of defilement, the upside-down state of desire occurs in this world. It unites with stimulation to become eighty four thousand kinds of random thoughts that are either upright or perverse. From this there come into being the womb arbudas, which multiply throughout the world in the form of humans, animals, dragons, and immortals until their kinds abound.

Commentary:

This passage discusses womb-born beings. Womb-born beings exist because of emotion. When emotional love reaches its peak and intercourse results, the womb-born being is conceived. Human beings, animals, dragons , and immortals are born in this way. **"Through a continuous process of defilement, the upside-down state of desire occurs in this world."** "Defilement" refers to what is unclean, disorderly, and confused. The "continuous process" can refer to the six paths of rebirth, or it can refer to a single being's cycle, a rebirth among humans, animals, dragons, and immortals. Thoughts of love and desire are upside down. Doing what one should not do is to be upside down. Doing what is against the law or not in accord with Dharma is to be upside down. The desire **"unites with stimulation to become eighty four thousand kinds of random thoughts that are either upright or perverse."** "Stimulation" refers to the creation of karma – to the acting out of the desire. **"From this there come into being the womb arbudas, which multiply throughout the world in the form of humans, animals, dragons, and immortals until their kinds abound."** Birth from a womb – that of mammals – is a result of emotion and the three conditions of father, mother, and individual karma. Warmth, a condition necessary for egg-born beings, is not necessary for birth from a womb. "Arbuda" is a Sanskrit word

which means "globule" and refers to the foetus in its second week of development. These kinds of beings – humans, animals, dragons, and immortals – spread throughout every land.

N3 Moisture-born.

Sutra:

"Through a continuous process of attachment, the upside-down state of inclination occurs in this world. It unites with warmth to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts that are vacillating and inverted. From this there come into being through moisture the appearance of peshis, which multiply throughout the lands in the form of insects and crawling invertebrates, until their kinds abound.

Commentary:

This passage discusses beings born from moisture. Birth from moisture is a result of warmth and the two conditions of individual karma and moisture. **"Through a continuous process of attachment, the upside-down state of inclination occurs in this world."** "Attachment" refers to clinging and being unable to change. Beings whose natures are attached undergo the turning wheel of rebirth. "Inclination" refers to a tendency to go in certain directions or toward certain things. The inclination **unites with warmth to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts that are vacillating and inverted."** "Warmth" refers to the creation of karma. "Vacillating" means fluttering. "Inverted" means covered. **"From this there come into being through moisture the appearance of peshis, which multiply throughout the lands in the form of insects and crawling invertebrates, until their kinds abound."** "Peshi" is a Sanskrit word which means "soft flesh"; it refers to all initial stage of development of beings born from moisture. "Insects and crawling invertebrates" refer to small worms, bugs, and microscopic-organisms – simple forms of life. These creatures breed in ponds and pools or where ever there is moisture. They are found everywhere throughout the world.

Ordinary people cannot observe it, but all twelve type of beings are in fact interrelated. People have a connection with all these other kinds of beings.

N4 Transformation-born.

Sutra:

“Through a continuous process of change, the upside-down state of borrowing occurs in this world. It unites with contact to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts of new and old. From this there come into being through transformation the appearance of ghanas, which multiply throughout the lands in the form of metamorphic flying and crawling creatures, until their kinds abound.

Commentary:

This section discusses birth by transformation. Only one condition is required, the condition of individual karma. If one’s karma is such that one delights in what is new and grows tired of what is old, then birth by transformation can occur. So it is that some mice can be transformed into bats. Some birds can turn into fish or amphibians. Caterpillars can turn into butterflies. This kind of upside-down state among creatures causes them to change and transform. **“Through a continuous process of change, the upside-down state of borrowing occurs in this world.”** Because there is a borrowing back and forth, changes and transformations take place among creatures. **“It unites with contact to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts of new and old.”** Some creatures despise the old and enjoy the new. They get tired of what is old and want to trade it for something new. And so a bird may tire of being a bird and wish to change into an amphibian, such as a frog. Some caterpillars, grubs, or maggots tire of being worms and want to change into insects. such as butterflies. Some mice tire of being mice and want to change into bats. These are all examples of the birth of beings by transformation. **“From this there come into being through transformation the appearance of ghanas, which multiply throughout the lands.”**

"Ghana" is a Sanskrit word which means "solid flesh," referring in this case to the bodies of metamorphic beings. All the subsequent categories of beings use the term ghana to represent their development. These transformation-born beings spread throughout the world **"in the form of metamorphic flying and crawling creatures, until their kinds abound."** Crawling creatures turn into flying creatures; flying creatures can turn into creatures that swim. They transform among one another, and their kinds abound.

N5 Having form.

Sutra:

"Through a continuous process of restraint, the upside-down state of obstruction occurs in this world. It unites with attachment to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts of refinement and brilliance. From this there come into being the ghanas of appearance that possess form, which multiply throughout the lands in the form of auspicious and inauspicious essences, until their kinds abound.

Commentary:

This section discusses beings with form. **"Through a continuous process of restraint, the upside-down state of obstruction occurs in this world."** "Restraint" refers to detaining and hindering. Many circumstances unite to form an obstruction. **"It unites with attachment to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts of refinement and brilliance."** "Attachment" refers to the actualizing of karma. These kinds of beings are extremely intelligent. **"From this there come into being the ghanas of appearance that possess form, which multiply throughout the lands.** This kind of solid flesh has form. These beings appear **in the form of auspicious and inauspicious essences, until their kinds abound."** These brilliant beings have form, and sometimes it is extremely auspicious for people to see them, though it may be very inauspicious for other people to see them. Although these beings have form, they are not a common sight. Fireflies and pearl-producing oysters are examples of this

category of beings. Even though they are rarely seen, they do exist. These kinds of living beings also abound in the universe.

N6 Without form.

Sutra:

"Through a continuous process of annihilation and dispersion, the upside-down state of delusion occurs in this world. It unites with darkness to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts of obscurity and hiding. From this there come into being the ghanas of formless beings, which multiply throughout the lands as those that are empty, dispersed, annihilated, and submerged until their kinds abound.

Commentary:

This section discusses beings without form; it refers to beings in the heavens of the formless realm. **"Through a continuous process of annihilation and dispersion, the upside-down state of delusion occurs in this world."** Although "annihilation and dispersion" implies total negation, so that one sees nothing, there still exists, nonetheless, a consciousness and karma, which are what these beings are composed of. Therefore, there is rebirth. "Delusion" refers to a lack of clarity, which comes about because of ignorance and through being upside down. **"It unites with darkness to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts of obscurity and hiding."** Imperceptibly there is karma which invisibly becomes these myriad random thoughts. "Obscurity and hiding" means that these thoughts are not easy to detect. **"From this there come into being the ghanas of formless beings, which multiply throughout the lands.** They spread through every land, **as those that are empty, dispersed, annihilated, and submerged until their kinds abound."** "Empty" refers to beings in the Heaven of Boundless Emptiness. "Dispersed" refers to beings in the Heaven of Boundless Consciousness. "Annihilated" refers to beings in the Heaven of Nothing Whatsoever, and "submerged" refers to beings in the

Heaven of Neither Thought Nor Non-thought. So these are beings of the Heavens of the Four Stations of Emptiness in the formless realm. These beings are endowed with a karmic consciousness, but no physical form. These beings, too, abound in the world.

N7 Having thought.

Sutra:

"Through a continuous process of illusory imaginings, the upside-down state of shadows occurs in this world. It unites with memory to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts that are hidden and bound up. From this there come into being the ghanas of those with thought, which multiply throughout the lands in the form of spirits, ghosts, and weird essences, until their kinds abound.

Commentary:

"**Through a continuous process of illusory imaginings, the upside-down state of shadows occurs in this world.** This passage refers to beings born with thought, but without physical form. These are such beings as spirits, ghosts, and weird essences. In the beginning these beings come about because of shadows that **"unites with memory to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts that are hidden and bound up."** They are hidden away, and no one is aware of them. Their random thoughts mass together, and **"from this there come into being the ghanas of those with thought, which multiply throughout the lands in the form of spirits, ghosts, and weird essences, until their kinds abound."** "Those with thought' does not refer to the kind of thought necessary for birth from an egg. The kind of thought referred to here is false thinking that is created. Some ghosts and spirits are devious, and some behave properly. Some ghost kings are even manifestations of Bodhisattvas, while others are actually unreliable beings. "Weird essences" however, are totally unorthodox and devious. Sometimes people are referred to in this way, indicating that they are not wholesome or good. The manifestation of these weird essences are eerie unpredictable portents.

Their kinds are so many one could never describe them all. The retinue of such creatures fills up every corner of the world

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N8 Without thought.

Sutra:

“Through a continuous process of dullness and slowness, the upside-down state of stupidity occurs in this world. It unites with obstinacy to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts that are dry and attenuated. From this there come into being the ghanas of those without thought, which multiply throughout the lands as their essence and spirit change into earth, wood, metal, or stone, until their kinds abound.

Commentary:

“Through a continuous process of dullness and slowness, the upside-down state of stupidity occurs in this world.” Obtuseness and dullness create an entire cycle from which arise the *li mei*, and *wang liang* ghosts. The karma wrought from stupidity **“unites with obstinacy to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts that are dry and attenuated.”** They simply dry up mentally. **“From this there come into being the ghanas of those without thought, which multiply throughout the lands as their essence and spirit change into earth, wood, metal, or stone, until their kinds abound.”** Because their thought is dry and attenuated, their very essence and spirit transform into earth, wood, metal, or stone. These kinds of beings are also found everywhere. How can their essence and spirit turn into these things?

In Hong Kong there’s a place called Wang Fu Mountain (the name means “gazing out to watch him return”). The story goes that a certain woman’s husband enlisted in the navy and never returned to her. But every day she would go stand on this mountain and gaze out to sea. Every day she would stand there gazing and holding her child until eventually her thought became so attenuated that her essence underwent a transformation, and she turned to stone. To

this day you can see the rock shaped like the woman with the child on her back. She's still gazing. It's not at all easy to convince people that one's spirit and essence can turn into earth, wood, metal, or stone, but in fact it can. It really does happen. There are many instances of people turning into stone. There's another way this can happen, too. If, for example, a person has a fiery temper, and the fire of his nature reaches a peak, his very essence can transform into coal. The fire in his nature is so intense that he becomes a substance that is easily burned. People are composed of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth, and if they remain in constant contact with any one element and become too much involved in it, they can turn into that very element. It happens because of attachment and attenuated thoughts. When that phenomenon occurs, can that being ever become a person again? Yes, but one knows not how long it will take. It would involve an extremely long period of time.

N9 Not totally having form.

Sutra:

"Through a continuous process of parasitic interaction, the upside-down state of simulation occurs in this world. It unites with defilement to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts of according and relying. From this there come into being those not totally endowed with form, who become ghanas of form which multiply throughout the lands until their kinds abound, in such ways as jellyfish that use shrimp for eyes.

Commentary:

This section discusses living beings who are not totally endowed with form. **"Through a continuous process of parasitic interaction, the upside-down state of simulation occurs in this world. It unites with defilement to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts of according and relying."** "According and relying" refers to a mutual dependence. **"From this there come into being those not totally endowed with form,**

who become ghanas of form which multiply throughout the lands until their kinds abound.” They are not totally endowed with form, but through a parasitic interaction they become involved with a being that is endowed with form. These beings appear **“in such ways as jellyfish that use shrimp for eyes.”** The jellyfish doesn’t have any eyes in its physical makeup, so it borrows the eyes of the shrimp, by allowing a parasitic relationship. Jellyfish often look like mere bubbles in the water, but they actually belong to this category of beings: those not totally endowed with form. There are all kinds of beings all over the place that fall into this category.

N10 Not totally without form.

Sutra:

“Through a continuous process of mutual enticement, an upside-down state of the nature occurs in this world. It unites with mantras to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts of beckoning and summoning. From this there come into being those not totally lacking form, who take ghanas which are formless and multiply through out the lands, until their kinds abound, as the hidden beings of mantras and incantations.

Commentary:

This category is those not totally lacking form. Basically they have no form, except when they are beckoned by mantras. **“Through a continuous process of mutual enticement, an upside-down state of the nature occurs in this world.”** There is an interaction which is enticing to both. This perversion of the nature results in a union **“with mantras to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts of beckoning and summoning.”** Recently I talked about the Dharma of “Hooking and Summoning,” which is another name for what is being discussed here. One beckons by calling the name of the being. Usually one does not see such beings, but when one recites a mantra, the being reveals its form. When they reveal themselves, one can often see them. Although we speak of these creatures as being “ghosts and

spirits," they are a special kind of mantra spirit, as we can see from this passage of text. **"From this there come into being those not totally lacking form, who take ghanas which are formless and multiply through out the lands, until their kinds abound."** "Those not totally lacking form" refers to this category of ghosts and spirits – be they Dharma protectors or deviant spirits. They are **"the hidden beings of mantras and incantations."** In the Secret School there exist mantras which summon these kinds of beings.

N11 Not totally with thought.

Sutra:

"Through a continuous process of false unity, the upside-down state of transgression occurs in this world. It unites with unlike formations to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts of reciprocal interchange. From this there come into being those not totally endowed with thought, which become ghanas possessing thought and which multiply throughout the lands until their kinds abound in such forms as the varata, which turns a different creature into its own species.

Commentary:

"Through a continuous process of false unity, the upside-down state of transgression occurs in this world. It unites with unlike formations to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts of reciprocal interchange." The two are different, but they change formation to become the same. "Eighty-four thousand" is a general number that is used for each category of being, but in fact each category contains tremendously many kinds of beings – an incalculable number. **"From this there come into being those not totally endowed with thought, which become ghanas possessing thought and which multiply throughout the lands until their kinds abound."** To begin with, the creature did not conceive of itself as becoming a certain kind of being, but through a process of thought it becomes a certain type of being. This refers to beings **"in such forms as the varata, which turns a different creature into its own species."** "Varata" is a Sanskrit

term for a kind of wasp. This wasp takes silk worm caterpillars and transforms them into its own young. It puts the caterpillars in its mud nest and for seven days recites a mantra which says, "Be like me, be like me." At the end of that period, the change takes place. They are called beings not totally endowed with thought, because the caterpillars do not initially think they will turn into wasps. In the *Book of Poetry* (*Shih Ching*) there is the phrase:

The wasp owes its offspring to the caterpillar.

The wasp steals the caterpillars and removes them to its nest where it uses the mantra to transform them.

N12 Not totally without thought.

Sutra:

"Through a continuous process of enmity and harm the upside-down state of killing occurs in this world. It unites with monstrosities to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts of devouring one's father and mother. From this there come into being those not totally lacking thought, who take ghanas with no thought and multiply through out the lands, until their kinds abound in such forms as the dirt owl, which hatches its young from clods of dirt, and the P'ou Ching bird, which incubates a poisonous fruit to create its young. In each case, the young thereupon eat the parents.

Commentary:

This is the twelfth category of beings – those not totally lacking thought. They have thought, but it is totally warped. Their very spirit is twisted. **"Through a continuous process of enmity and harm the upside-down state of killing occurs in this world."** You injure me, and I'll injure you. You kill me, and I'll kill you. You hate me, and I hate you. **"It unites with monstrosities to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts of devouring one's father and mother."** When this hate has built to the point that it permeates everything, then weird creatures come into being.

"From this there come into being those not totally lacking thought, who take ghanas with no thought and multiply through out the lands, until their kinds abound." They appear **in such forms as the dirt owl, which hatches its young from clods of dirt."** The owl is known in China as the "cat-headed hawk" and as "the unfilial bird." This bird lays no eggs, but incubates a clod of dirt and is able to bring its young out of it. The problem is that when these young dirt owls hatch, they devour their mother. That's why the bird is called unfilial. **"The P'ou Ching bird, which incubates a poisonous fruit to create its young"**: there is an animal in China called the *p'ou ching* that looks like a wolf but is smaller. This animal can't reproduce, either so it takes the fruit from a poisonous tree and can incubate it to create its young. **"In each case, the young thereupon eat the parents."** But the case is the same: the young eat the mother. This unfilial beast is perhaps the one being referred to in the text. "Bird" may be a mistranslation. These kinds of beings can be found in every country.

M2 Reiterates their name and number.

Sutra:

"These are the twelve categories of living beings."

Commentary:

Above have been explained **"the twelve categories of living beings."**

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When Buddhism first came to China from India, one of the most important tasks required for its establishment was the translation of the Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Chinese. This work involved a great many people, such as the renowned monk National Master Kumarajiva (fifth century), who led an assembly of over 800 people to work on the translation of the Tripitaka (Buddhist canon) for over a decade. Because of the work of individuals such as these, nearly the entire Buddhist Tripitaka of over a thousand texts exists to the present day in Chinese.

Now the banner of the Buddha’s Teachings is being firmly planted in Western soil, and the same translation work is being done from Chinese into English. Since 1970, the Buddhist Text Translation Society (BTTS) has been making a paramount contribution toward this goal. Aware that the Buddhist Tripitaka is a work of such magnitude that its translation could never be entrusted to a single person, the BTTS, emulating the translation assemblies of ancient times, does not publish a work until it has passed through four committees for primary translation, revision, editing, and certification. The leaders of these committees are Bhikshus (monks) and Bhikshunis (nuns) who have devoted their lives to the study and practice of the Buddha’s teachings. For this reason, all of the works of the BTTS put an emphasis on what the principles of the Buddha’s teachings mean in terms of actual practice and not simply hypothetical conjecture.

The translations of canonical works by the Buddhist Text Translation Society are accompanied by extensive commentaries by the Venerable Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua.

BTTS Publications

Buddhist Sutras. Amitabha Sutra, Dharma Flower (Lotus) Sutra, Flower Adornment (Avatamsaka) Sutra, Heart Sutra & Verses without a Stand, Shurangama Sutra, Sixth Patriarch Sutra, Sutra in Forty-two Sections, Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva, Vajra Prajna Paramita (Diamond) Sutra.

Commentarial Literature. Buddha Root Farm, City of 10000 Buddhas Recitation Handbook, Filiality: The Human Source, Herein Lies the Treasure-trove, Listen to Yourself Think Everything Over, Shastra on the Door to Understanding the Hundred Dharmas, Song of Enlightenment, The Ten Dharma Realms Are Not beyond a Single Thought, Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma, Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma during the 1993 Trip to Taiwan, Water Mirror Reflecting Heaven.

Biographical. In Memory of the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua, Pictorial Biography of the Venerable Master Hsü Yün, Records of High Sanghans, Records of the Life of the Venerable Master Hsüan Hua, Three Steps One Bow, World Peace Gathering, News from True Cultivators, Open Your Eyes Take a Look at the World, With One Heart Bowing to the City of 10000 Buddhas.

Children's Books. Cherishing Life, Human Roots: Buddhist Stories for Young Readers.

Musics, Novels and Brochures. Songs for Awakening, Awakening, The Three Cart Patriarch, City of 10000 Buddhas Color Brochure, Celebrisi's Journey, Heng Ch'au's Journal.

The Buddhist Monthly–Vajra Bodhi Sea is a monthly journal of orthodox Buddhism which has been published by the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, formerly known as the Sino-American Buddhist Association, since 1970. Each issue contains the most recent translations of the Buddhist canon by the Buddhist Text Translation Society. Also included in each issue are a biography of a great Patriarch of Buddhism from the ancient past, sketches of the lives of contemporary monastics and lay-followers around the world, articles on practice, and other material. The journal is bilingual, Chinese and English

Please visit our web-site at `www.bttsonline.org` for the latest publications and for ordering information.

The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association

Mission

The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association (formerly the Sino-American Buddhist Association) was founded by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua in the United States of America in 1959. Taking the Dharma Realm as its scope, the Association aims to disseminate the genuine teachings of the Buddha throughout the world. The Association is dedicated to translating the Buddhist canon, propagating the Orthodox Dharma, promoting ethical education, and bringing benefit and happiness to all beings. Its hope is that individuals, families, the society, the nation, and the entire world will, under the transforming influence of the Buddhadharma, gradually reach the state of ultimate truth and goodness.

The Founder

The Venerable Master, whose names were An Tse and To Lun, received the Dharma name Hsuan Hua and the transmission of Dharma from Venerable Master Hsu Yun in the lineage of the Wei Yang Sect. He was born in Manchuria, China, at the beginning of the century. At nineteen, he entered the monastic order and dwelt in a hut by his mother's grave to practice filial piety. He meditated, studied the teachings, ate only one meal a day, and slept sitting up. In 1948 he went to Hong Kong, where he established the Buddhist Lecture Hall and other Way-places. In 1962 he brought the Proper Dharma to the West, lecturing on several dozen Mahayana Sutras in the United States. Over the years, the Master established more than twenty monasteries of Proper Dharma under the auspices of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association and the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. He also founded centers for the translation of the Buddhist canon and for education to spread the influence of the Dharma in the East and West. The Master manifested the stillness in the United States in 1995. Through his lifelong, selfless dedication to teaching living beings with wisdom and compassion, he influenced countless people to change their faults and to walk upon the pure, bright path to enlightenment.

Dharma Propagation, Buddhist Text Translation, and Education

The Venerable Master Hua's three great vows after leaving the home-life were (1) to propagate the Dharma, (2) to translate the Buddhist Canon, and (3) to promote education. In order to make these vows a reality, the Venerable Master based himself on the Three Principles and the Six Guidelines. Courageously facing every hardship, he founded monasteries, schools, and centers in the West, drawing in living beings and teaching them on a vast scale. Over the years, he founded the following institutions:

The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas and Its Branches

In propagating the Proper Dharma, the Venerable Master not only trained people but also founded Way-places where the Dharma wheel could turn and living beings could be saved. He wanted to provide cultivators with pure places to practice in accord with the Buddha's regulations. Over the years, he founded many Way-places of Proper Dharma. In the United States and Canada, these include the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas; Gold Mountain Monastery; Gold Sage Monastery; Gold Wheel Monastery; Gold Summit Monastery; Gold Buddha Monastery; Avatamsaka Monastery; Long Beach Monastery; the City of the Dharma Realm; Berkeley Buddhist Monastery; Avatamsaka Hermitage; and Blessings, Prosperity, and Longevity Monastery. In Taiwan, there are the Dharma Realm Buddhist Books Distribution Association, Dharma Realm Monastery, and Amitabha Monastery. In Malaysia, there are Zi Yun Dong Monastery, Deng Bi An Monastery, and Lotus Vihara. In Hong Kong, there are the Buddhist Lecture Hall and Cixing Monastery.

Purchased in 1974, the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is the hub of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association. The City is located in Talmage, Mendocino County, California, 110 miles north of San Francisco. Eighty of the 488 acres of land are in active use. The remaining acreage consists of meadows, orchards, and woods. With over seventy large buildings containing over 2,000 rooms, blessed with serenity and fresh, clean air, it is the first large Buddhist monastic community in the United States. It is also an international center for the Proper Dharma.

Although the Venerable Master Hua was the Ninth Patriarch in the Weiyang Sect of the Chan School, the monasteries he founded emphasize all of the five main practices of Mahayana Buddhism (Chan meditation, Pure Land,

esoteric, Vinaya (moral discipline), and doctrinal studies). This accords with the Buddha's words: "The Dharma is level and equal, with no high or low." At the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, the rules of purity are rigorously observed. Residents of the City strive to regulate their own conduct and to cultivate with vigor. Taking refuge in the Proper Dharma, they lead pure and selfless lives, and attain peace in body and mind. The Sutras are expounded and the Dharma wheel is turned daily. Residents dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to making Buddhism flourish. Monks and nuns in all the monasteries take one meal a day, always wear their precept sash, and follow the Three Principles:

Freezing, we do not scheme.
Starving, we do not beg.
Dying of poverty, we ask for nothing.
According with conditions, we do not change.
Not changing, we accord with conditions.
We adhere firmly to our three great principles.
We renounce our lives to do the Buddha's work.
We take the responsibility to mold our own destinies.
We rectify our lives to fulfill the Sanghan's role.
Encountering specific matters,
we understand the principles.
Understanding the principles,
we apply them in specific matters.
We carry on the single pulse of
the Patriarchs' mind-transmission.

The monasteries also follow the Six Guidelines: not contending, not being greedy, not seeking, not being selfish, not pursuing personal advantage, and not lying.

International Translation Institute

The Venerable Master vowed to translate the Buddhist Canon (Tripitaka) into Western languages so that it would be widely accessible throughout the world. In 1973, he founded the International Translation Institute on Washington Street in San Francisco for the purpose of translating Buddhist scriptures into English and other languages. In 1977, the Institute was merged into Dharma Realm Buddhist University as the Institute for the Translation of Buddhist Texts. In 1991, the Venerable Master purchased a large building in

Burlingame (south of San Francisco) and established the International Translation Institute there for the purpose of translating and publishing Buddhist texts. To date, in addition to publishing over one hundred volumes of Buddhist texts in Chinese, the Association has published more than one hundred volumes of English, French, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Japanese translations of Buddhist texts, as well as bilingual (Chinese and English) editions. Audio and video tapes also continue to be produced. The monthly journal Vajra Bodhi Sea, which has been in circulation for nearly thirty years, has been published in bilingual (Chinese and English) format in recent years.

In the past, the difficult and vast mission of translating the Buddhist canon in China was sponsored and supported by the emperors and kings themselves. In our time, the Venerable Master encouraged his disciples to cooperatively shoulder this heavy responsibility, producing books and audio tapes and using the medium of language to turn the wheel of Proper Dharma and do the great work of the Buddha. All those who aspire to devote themselves to this work of sages should uphold the Eight Guidelines of the International Translation Institute:

1. One must free oneself from the motives of personal fame and profit.
2. One must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.
3. One must refrain from aggrandizing one's work and denigrating that of others.
4. One must not establish oneself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with one's fault-finding.
5. One must take the Buddha-mind as one's own mind.
6. One must use the wisdom of Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles.
7. One must request Virtuous Elders of the ten directions to certify one's translations.
8. One must endeavor to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

These are the Venerable Master's vows, and participants in the work of translation should strive to realize them.

Instilling Goodness Elementary School, Developing Virtue Secondary School, Dharma Realm Buddhist University

"Education is the best national defense." The Venerable Master Hua saw clearly that in order to save the world, it is essential to promote good education. If we want to save the world, we have to bring about a complete change in people's minds and guide them to cast out unwholesomeness and to pursue goodness. To this end the Master founded Instilling Goodness Elementary School in 1974, and Developing Virtue Secondary School and Dharma Realm Buddhist University in 1976.

In an education embodying the spirit of Buddhism, the elementary school teaches students to be filial to parents, the secondary school teaches students to be good citizens, and the university teaches such virtues as humaneness and righteousness. Instilling Goodness Elementary School and Developing Virtue Secondary School combine the best of contemporary and traditional methods and of Western and Eastern cultures. They emphasize moral virtue and spiritual development, and aim to guide students to become good and capable citizens who will benefit humankind. The schools offer a bilingual (Chinese/English) program where boys and girls study separately. In addition to standard academic courses, the curriculum includes ethics, meditation, Buddhist studies, and so on, giving students a foundation in virtue and guiding them to understand themselves and explore the truths of the universe. Branches of the schools (Sunday schools) have been established at branch monasteries with the aim of propagating filial piety and ethical education.

Dharma Realm Buddhist University, whose curriculum focuses on the Proper Dharma, does not merely transmit academic knowledge. It emphasizes a foundation in virtue, which expands into the study of how to help all living beings discover their inherent nature. Thus, Dharma Realm Buddhist University advocates a spirit of shared inquiry and free exchange of ideas, encouraging students to study various canonical texts and use different experiences and learning styles to tap their inherent wisdom and fathom the meanings of those texts. Students are encouraged to practice the principles they have understood and apply the Buddhadharma in their lives, thereby nurturing their wisdom and virtue. The University aims to produce outstanding individuals of high moral character who will be able to bring benefit to all sentient beings.

Sangha and Laity Training Programs

In the Dharma-ending Age, in both Eastern and Western societies there are very few monasteries that actually practice the Buddha's regulations and strictly uphold the precepts. Teachers with genuine wisdom and understanding, capable of guiding those who aspire to pursue careers in Buddhism, are very rare. The Venerable Master founded the Sangha and Laity Training Programs in 1982 with the goals of raising the caliber of the Sangha, perpetuating the Proper Dharma, providing professional training for Buddhists around the world on both practical and theoretical levels, and transmitting the wisdom of the Buddha.

The Sangha Training Program gives monastics a solid foundation in Buddhist studies and practice, training them in the practical affairs of Buddhism and Sangha management. After graduation, students will be able to assume various responsibilities related to Buddhism in monasteries, institutions, and other settings. The program emphasizes a thorough knowledge of Buddhism, under-standing of the scriptures, earnest cultivation, strict observance of precepts, and the development of a virtuous character, so that students will be able to propagate the Proper Dharma and perpetuate the Buddha's wisdom. The Laity Training Program offers courses to help laypeople develop correct views, study and practice the teachings, and understand monastic regulations and ceremonies, so that they will be able to contribute their abilities in Buddhist organizations.

Let Us Go Forward Together

In this Dharma-ending Age when the world is becoming increasingly dangerous and evil, the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, in consonance with its guiding principles, opens the doors of its monasteries and centers to those of all religions and nationalities. Anyone who is devoted to humaneness, righteousness, virtue, and the pursuit of truth, and who wishes to understand him or herself and help humankind, is welcome to come study and practice with us. May we together bring benefit and happiness to all living beings.

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Verse of Transference

May the merit and virtue accrued from this work,
Adorn the Buddha's Pure Lands,
Repaying four kinds of kindness above,
And aiding those suffering in the paths below.

May those who see and hear of this,
All bring forth the resolve for Bodhi,
And when this retribution body is over,
Be born together in ultimate bliss.

Dharma Protector Wei T’o Bodhisattva

The Shurangama Sutra

The Shurangama Sutra

Volume Seven

a simple explanation by the

Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

English translation by the
Buddhist Text Translation Society

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The Shurangama Sutra - Volume Seven

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Introduction

This is the seventh of eight volumes of the *Shurangama Sutra*, with commentaries from the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua.

In the previous volume, Ananda had asked what are the successive stages a cultivator of the Way will experience as one progresses forward. Here, the Buddha describes them in detail and in sequence.

In “The Three Gradual Stages”, the Buddha describes the three initial stages of a cultivator. First, the cultivator must avoid eating the five pungent plants. Second, the cultivator must refrain from killing, stealing, lustful habits, and must control both physical and mental activity through the use of precepts. Third, the cultivator must counter and forbear their karmic manifestations as they gain their sagely positions.

As cultivators’ emotional love and desires are extinguished, their residual habits will not arise anymore. Understanding that their minds are false, they proceed on to the next fifty-five stages, as described in “The Bodhisattva Stages”: the ten faiths, the ten dwellings, the ten conducts, the ten tranferences, the four positions of additional practices, the ten positions of the ten grounds and finally, the positions of equal and wonderful enlightenment. The Buddha, however, also reminds Ananda that the cultivator must not attach himself to any of these stages.

Upon hearing such wonderful explanations, Manjushri asks the Buddha for the name of the Sutra, and how it should be upheld. In "The Names of the Sutra", the Buddha declares the five names of the Sutra.

In "The Seven Destinites", Ananda, wishing to keep living beings from straying and lingering in the wheel of birth & death, asks about the painful destinies of rebirth. The Buddha then explains about the destinies of the hells, ghosts, animals, people, immortals, gods and asuras.

Although the seven destinies are ultimately false and unreal, the Buddha finally exhorts cultivators to rid themselves of the karmic habits of killing, stealing and lust (which exist in all seven destinies). Otherwise, one is destined to be with the retinue of demons.

User’s Guide

to the Shurangama Sutra series

Because of the length of the *Shurangama Sutra*, and the need to provide aid to various readers, the Sutra has been compiled into a series of 9 books: the “Sutra Text and Suppliments”, and the remaining Volumes one to eight.

The “Sutra Text and Suppliments” contains:

1. the entire Sutra text, which is in excess of 2700 paragraphs;
2. the entire outline, which contains 1676 entries;
3. and a master index, which has index references for both the “Sutra Text and Suppliments” and the eight volumes.

Volumes one to eight contain:

1. the Sutra text, with commentaries;
2. the local outline entries;
3. and a local index.

Readers who wish to read or recite the Sutra in its entirety will find the “Sutra Text and Suppliments” very useful.

Those who wish to deeply study the Sutra with its commentaries will find volumes one to eight indispensable.

Exhortation to Protect and Propagate

by Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua

Within Buddhism, there are very many important sutras. However, the most important Sutra is the *Shurangama Sutra*. If there are places which have the *Shurangama Sutra*, then the Proper Dharma dwells in the world. If there is no *Shurangama Sutra*, then the Dharma Ending Age appears. Therefore, we Buddhist disciples, each and every one, must bring our strength, must bring our blood, and must bring our sweat to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*. In the *Sutra of the Ultimate Extinction of the Dharma*, it says very, very clearly that in the Dharma Ending Age, the *Shurangama Sutra* is the first to disappear, and the rest of the sutras disappear after it. If the *Shurangama Sutra* does not disappear, then the Proper Dharma Age is present. Because of that, we Buddhist disciples must use our lives to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*, must use vows and resolution to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*, and cause the *Shurangama Sutra* to be known far and wide, reaching every nook and cranny, reaching into each and every dust-mote, reaching out to the exhaustion of empty space and of the Dharma Realm. If we can do that, then there will be a time of Proper Dharma radiating great light.

Why would the *Shurangama Sutra* be destroyed? It is because it is too true. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's true body. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's sharira. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's true and actual stupa and shrine. Therefore, because

the *Shurangama Sutra* is so true, all the demon kings use all kinds of methods to destroy the *Shurangama Sutra*. They begin by starting rumors, saying that the *Shurangama Sutra* is phony. Why do they say the *Shurangama Sutra* is phony? It is because the *Shurangama Sutra* speaks too truly, especially in the sections on The Four Decisive Deeds, the Twenty-five Sages Describing Perfect Penetration, and the States of the Fifty Skandha Demons. Those of off-center persuasions and externally-oriented ways, weird demons and strange freaks, are unable to stand it. Consequently there are a good many senseless people who claim that the *Shurangama Sutra* is a forgery.

Now, the principles set forth in the *Shurangama Sutra* are on the one hand proper, and on the other in accord with principle, and the weird demons and strange freaks, those in various cults and sects, all cannot hide away their forms. Most senseless people, in particular unwise scholars and garbage-collecting professors "Tread upon the holy writ." With their extremely scant and partial understanding, they are confused and unclear, lacking real erudition and true and actual wisdom. That is why they falsely criticize. We who study the Buddhadharma should very deeply be aware of these circumstances. Therefore, wherever we go, we should bring up the *Shurangama Sutra*. Wherever we go, we should propagate the *Shurangama Sutra*. Wherever we go, we should introduce the *Shurangama Sutra* to people. Why is that? It is because we wish to cause the Proper Dharma long to dwell in the world.

If the *Shurangama Sutra* is regarded as true, then there is no problem. To verify its truth, let me say that if the *Shurangama Sutra* were phony, then I would willingly fall into the hells forever through all eternity—for being unable to recognize the Buddhadharma—for mistaking the false for true. If the *Shurangama Sutra* is true, then life after life in every time I make the vow to propagate the Great Dharma of the Shurangama, that I shall in every time and every place propagate the true principles of the Shurangama.

Everyone should pay attention to the following point. How could the *Shurangama Sutra* not have been spoken by the Buddha? No one else could have spoken the *Shurangama Sutra*. And so I hope that all those people who make senseless accusations will wake up fast and stop creating the causes for suffering in the Hell of Pulling Out Tongues. No matter who the scholar is, no matter what country students of the Buddhadharma are from, all should quickly mend their ways, admit their mistakes, and manage to change. There is no greater good than that. I can then say that all who look at the *Shurangama Sutra*, all who listen to the *Shurangama Sutra*, and all who investigate the *Shurangama Sutra*, will very quickly accomplish Buddhahood.

Composed by Gold Mountain Shramana Tripitaka Master Hua
Translated by Bhikshuni Heng Hsien
Reviewed by Shramanerika Heng Wen

The Eight Guidelines

of the Buddhist Text Translation Society

1. A volunteer must free him/herself from the motives of personal fame and profit.
2. A volunteer must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.
3. A volunteer must refrain from aggrandizing his/her work and denigrating that of others.
4. A volunteer must not establish him/herself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with his or her fault-finding.
5. A volunteer must take the Buddha-mind as his/her own mind.
6. A volunteer must use the wisdom of Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles.
7. A volunteer must request Virtuous Elders in the ten directions to certify his/her translations.
8. A volunteer must endeavour to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

Outline

of the Shurangama Sutra

The outline for the Shurangama Sutra was compiled by Dharma Master Yuan Ying, which categorizes the various parts of the Sutra text consisting of over 2,700 paragraphs to 1,676 entries.

These entries are presented in the form of a tree-like structure, dividing the various parts of the Sutra text into groups, those groupings being sub-divided further and further, thus providing a detailed break-down of the entire text.

Though the outline is not a prerequisite to reading the Sutra text and the accompanying commentaries, it serves as a useful tool for students of the Way who wish to deeply study the Sutra. Without this outline, students may find it difficult to refer to specific parts of the text.

Because of the size of the outline (and the Sutra), only outline entries which pertain to the Sutra text contained within this book is included.

For the outline of the entire Sutra, please refer to the “Sutra Text and Suppliments”, where the entire sutra text, outline, and index entries are all combined into one single volume.

H4 He explains the pure conditions which give rise to the successive accomplishment of this position. 1
I1 He answers about the cause and effect of this position. 1
J1 The three gradual stages of this position. 1
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K2 Establishes that the position is the opposite of defilement. 2
K3 Explains the establishment of the position.. 3
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N3Concludes by calling this practice the foremost increase in vigor. 13
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釋迦牟尼文佛

Namo Original Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha

Verse for Opening a Sutra

The unsurpassed, profound, and wonderful Dharma,
Is difficult to encounter in hundreds of millions of eons,
I now see and hear it, receive and uphold it,
And I vow to fathom the Tathagata's true meaning.

CHAPTER 1

The Three Gradual Stages

H4 He explains the pure conditions which give rise to the successive accomplishment of this position.
I1 He answers about the cause and effect of this position.
J1 The three gradual stages of this position.
K1 Concludes the former discussion and begins the next.

Sutra:

"Ananda, each of these categories of beings is replete with all twelve kinds of upside-down states, just as pressing on one's eye produces a variety of flower-like images.

Commentary:

"Ananda, each of these twelve **categories of beings** which I have just described **is replete with all twelve kinds of upside-down states."** Not just the one kind of upside-down state that I mentioned is specific to each kind. Each category is influenced by all twelve kinds of upside down states. The random thoughts and upside-down states arise from falseness, **"…just as pressing on one's eye produces a variety of flower-like images."** If you push your finger up against your eye and then look, you will see weird visions. If you release the pressure, the visions disappear. It's because you pursue the false thoughts and upside-down states that you cannot get out of rebirth and you keep revolving in the cycle of

the twelve categories of living beings. If you do not follow after the false thoughts or pursue ignorance, but instead can return the light and illumine within – if you can return the hearing to hear the self nature – then you can break through ignorance, and all that exists disappears.

Sutra:

"With the inversion of wonderful perfection, the truly pure, bright mind becomes glutted with false and random thoughts.

Commentary:

From the falseness arises the state of being upside down, which in turn creates false thoughts. In the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, ignorance arises. From the basis of truth, one gives rise to falseness. The "false and random thoughts" are those just described in detail. The originally pure and bright mind becomes filled with myriad thoughts that are totally false and unreal.

K2 Establishes that the position is the opposite of defilement.

Sutra:

"Now, as you cultivate towards certification to the samadhi of the Buddha, you will go through three gradual stages in order to get rid of the basic cause of these random thoughts.

Commentary:

"Now, as you cultivate towards certification to the samadhi of the Buddha, you will go through three gradual stages…" You must establish three gradual levels and cultivate little by little. Then you can put an end to false thinking and **"…get rid of the basic cause of these random thoughts."**

Sutra:

"They work in just the way that poisonous honey is removed from a pure vessel that is washed with hot water mixed with the ashes of incense. Afterwards it can be used to store sweet dew.

Commentary:

"They work in just the way that poisonous honey is removed from a pure vessel that is washed with hot water mixed with the ashes." "Pure vessel" means that the jar was originally clean. It represents the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, inherent in us all, which is neither produced nor extinguished. The "Poisonous Honey" represents people's ignorance and afflictions. The "Hot Water" represents the Buddhadharma, which gradually washes us clean. "Washing" means to return the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One to its original form. **"Afterwards it can be used to store sweet dew."** It can store our genuine wisdom; it can hold the enlightenment to the Way. That's what "sweet dew" represents.

K3 Explains the establishment of the position.
L1 Asks for and lists their names.

Sutra:

"What are the three gradual stages? The first is to correct one's habits by getting rid of the aiding causes; the second is to truly cultivate to cut out the very essence of karmic offenses; the third is to increase one's vigor to prevent the manifestation of karma.

Commentary:

"What are the three gradual stages? The first is to correct one's habits by getting rid of the aiding causes." That refers to causes which contribute to the creation of karma. **"The second is to truly cultivate to cut out the very essence of karmic offenses."** That means to sweep clean the nature of karmic offenses that result from greed, hatred, stupidity, and so forth. **"The third is to increase one's vigor to prevent the manifestation of karma."** One progresses in one's cultivation to counteract the creation of any new karma in the present. One does not follow along in the present with one's propensity to create karma.

M1 Caution in eating.
N1 Asks about and answers that they rely on eating and should stop eating pungent plants.

Sutra:

"What are aiding causes? Ananda, the twelve categories of living beings in this world are not complete in themselves, but depend on four kinds of eating; that is, eating by portions, eating by contact, eating by thought, and eating by consciousness. Therefore, the Buddha said that all living beings must eat to live.

Commentary:

"What are aiding causes?" Some causes aid in the creation of wholesome karma, and some contribute to the creation of unwholesome karma. Here, the Buddha is referring to causes which bring about bad karma. **"Ananda, the twelve categories of living beings in this world,** just described, **are not complete in themselves, but depend on four kinds of eating".** They depend on eating to survive. **"That is, eating by portions"**: bite by bite, bit by bit, the way beings in the Six Desire Heavens, the asuras, humans, and animals take their food. **"Eating by contact"**: the ghosts and spirits eat by contact, and some beings in the heavens also eat this way. **"Eating by thought"**: in the Dhyana Heavens of the form realm, beings don't have to actually ingest the food. They take the bliss of dhyana as food – they can eat by thinking. **"Eating by consciousness"**: this includes the beings of the formless realm up through those in the Heaven of Neither Thought Nor Non-thought. They eat by discriminations of consciousness. **"Therefore, the Buddha said that all living beings must eat to live."** That was at the beginning of his teaching, when the Buddha wanted to break through the doctrines of externalists. When he said to them that all living beings must eat to live, the externalists laughed at him and said, "You call that 'Dharma?' Do you think we had to wait for you to tell us that? Who doesn't know that beings have to eat to live? Even children understand that."

In reply the Buddha said, "Well, tell me, then, how many kinds of eating are there?"

At that point the externalists were speechless. They couldn't come up with the answer. Then the Buddha explained the four kinds of eating.

Sutra:

"Ananda, all living beings can live if they eat what is sweet, and they will die if they take poison. Beings who seek samadhi should refrain from eating five pungent plants of this world.

Commentary:

This passage discusses the first gradual stage, getting rid of the aiding causes. The five pungent plants aid in the creation of unwholesome karma, and so the first step is to eliminate them from one's diet. **"Ananda, all living beings can live if they eat what is sweet, and they will die if they take poison."** "All living beings" refers to the twelve categories. "Sweet" here really means "edible"; the food is sweet in the sense that it is not poisonous, but is nourishing and palatable. "Poisonous" here does not necessarily mean lethal poison, but refers to such things as the five pungent plants, which in this context are considered poisonous. It refers to any food which has an unwholesome effect on beings, and contributes to an earlier death. It doesn't just mean eating something which is instantaneously fatal. **"Beings who seek samadhi should refrain from eating five pungent plants of this world."** The first step is to get rid of contributing causes. The five pungent plants have been described already. They are onions, garlic, leeks, scallions, and shallots.

N2 Explains in depth the ill-effects of eating pungent plants.

Sutra:

"If these five are eaten cooked, they increase one's sexual desire; if they are eaten raw, they increase one's anger.

Commentary:

“If these five are eaten cooked, they increase one’s sexual desire.” Meat has the same effect. That is one reason why people who cultivate the Way do not eat meat. The five pungent plants also increase desire, but not wholesome desire; rather, they are especially potent in increasing sexual desire, to the point that it is unbearable and one goes crazy with lust. **“If they are eaten raw, they increase one’s anger.”** They make one more stupid. People with wisdom do not lose their tempers. Those who do lose their tempers, for the most part are people who cannot clearly distinguish either the principles or the specifics. Something happens and they can’t see beyond it. It becomes an obstruction for them, and they do not know how to resolve it except by getting angry. But losing their temper doesn’t actually help the situation one bit. Meat also increases one’s afflictions and the propensity to get angry. And the more of these five pungent plants one eats, the bigger one’s temper grows.

Sutra:

“Therefore, even if people in this world who eat pungent plants can expound the twelve divisions of the sutra canon, the gods and immortals of the ten directions will stay far away from them because they smell so bad. However, after they eat these things the hungry ghosts will hover around and kiss their lips. Being always in the presence of ghosts, their blessings and virtue dissolve as the days go by, and they experience no lasting benefit.

Commentary:

“Therefore, even if people in this world who eat pungent plants can expound the twelve divisions of the sutra canon, the gods and immortals of the ten directions will stay far away from them because they smell so bad.” This refers to people who eat the five pungent plants or drink wine or eat meat. On the other hand, the gods and immortals will protect someone who does not ingest these things. Body odors come largely from what one eats.

People who enjoy eating beef, onions, and garlic have strong body odors. Their armpits often stink so badly that they can be smelled a long way off, and no one wants to get near them.

There are a number of people who are able to expound on the canon with all its twelve divisions:

Repeating verses and predictions,
Interjections and what was spoken
without request;
Past events, analogies,
causes and conditions,
This life, expansions,
and what never before existed;
With discussion,
that is twelve all together,
As in Great Wisdom Shastra's
thirty-third chapter.

Memorize the verse and you know the Twelve Divisions of the Canon.

But if one's eating is not pure, one's sole listeners will be hungry ghosts. The gods and immortals will not listen. The hungry ghosts are creatures that don't have anything to eat. But after people who don't hold to pure eating **"eat these things"**, meaning the five pungent plants and the like, **"the hungry ghosts will hover around and kiss their lips."** After people eat these strong-smelling foods, the odor lingers around them and attracts ghosts. The ghosts boldly go up and kiss those who partake of the five pungent plants, in an attempt to taste what they've eaten. Ghosts eat by contact, as we have learned, so those who eat these impure things are literally in the hands of ghosts who hang around and keep touching them. You may not be one who can see them, but they are really there doing just that. **"Being always in the presence of ghosts, their blessings and virtue dissolve as the days go by, and they experience no lasting benefit."** Plain and simple, this passage says that people

who eat the five pungent plants end up in the company of ghosts. Ghosts are their constant companions, even though the people themselves may be oblivious to the fact. Their blessings and virtue thereby decrease, and they end up with no advantages at all.

Sutra:

“People who eat pungent plants and also cultivate samadhi will not be protected by the Bodhisattvas, gods, immortals, or good spirits of the ten directions; therefore, the tremendously powerful demon kings, able to do as they please, will appear in the body of a Buddha and speak dharma for them, denouncing the prohibitive precepts and praising lust, rage, and delusion.

Commentary:

“People who eat pungent plants and also cultivate samadhi will not be protected by the Bodhisattvas, gods, immortals, or good spirits of the ten directions.” Who is referred to here? Whoever eats the five pungent plants. If you eat them, it’s referring to you. If I eat them, it’s referring to me. The text leaves the matter open. Why don’t Dharma protectors and good spirits guard such people? Because they smell too bad. Preferring purity, the protectors avoid the stench and do not come around to guard such people. However, protectors are essential in cultivation, for where the proper resides, the deviant does not, but where the proper is lacking, the deviant will win the advantage. The “proper” refers to the Dharma-protectors and good spirits who guard and aid cultivators of the Way. But in this case, where they do not come around, **“the tremendously powerful demon kings, able to do as they please, will appear in the body of a Buddha and speak Dharma for them.”** Seeing an unprotected cultivator, the powerful demonic kings come on the scene and gather him into their retinue. They will enter when they catch you off guard. How great is their power? They can turn into Buddhas! I’ve advised you that if in the future you obtain the Buddha Eye, you may see Buddhas come or Bodhisattvas come or gods and immortals come or spirits come. But if they are for real, they will have a light about them that is pure

and cool, and when it shines on you, you will experience extreme comfort, such as you have never known. That, then, is a true Sage. If it's a demon, it puts out heat. However, it requires a lot of wisdom to make this distinction. If you lack sufficient wisdom, you will not notice the power of his heat. Of course, the heat is not hot like a fire, but it is the case that the light of a demon carries heat, while the light of a Buddha does not.

Another way you can tell the difference between a demon appearing as a Buddha and an actual Buddha appearing is to look at the Dharma they propound. Demon kings will go about **"denouncing the prohibitive precepts and praising lust, rage, and delusion."** They will say, "Don't hold the precepts, that's a Small Vehicle practice. Those of the Great Vehicle kill, but it's not killing; steal, but it's not stealing; engage in lust, but it's not lust. So it's no problem. If you kill, you haven't broken any precept. The same goes for stealing and lust. Don't cling to such a small state. Don't hold to such fine distinctions in your conduct. Violations don't matter."

What you do before you receive the precepts does not count as a violation of them. But once you have taken a precept, for example, the precept against killing, it is then a violation of the precept if you commit the act of killing. Why? Because you clearly knew it was wrong but intentionally violated the prohibition. If you receive the precept against stealing and you go out and steal, you have violated that precept. You may have indulged in sexual misconduct before receiving the precept against it, but that doesn't count as an offense, because it's over and done. But if you conduct yourself in this way after taking the precept, then you violate it. Before you take the precept against lying, you are not in violation of the precept no matter what you say, but once you receive the precept you can't be irresponsible in what you say. Whatever it is, if you know, you know, and if you don't know, you don't know. You can't say you don't know when you really do; or say you know when you really don't. You can't beat around the bush when you speak. The straight mind is the Bodhimanda.

Someone may think; well, then, if I don't take them, I won't commit any violations, right? But now you know that it is better to take them, and if you don't you are missing the opportunity. If you do not receive the precepts, you will not be able to make any progress, either in your personal life or with regard to the Buddhadharma. You certainly should continue to make progress. Since we know it is a good thing to do, we should receive the precepts and then carefully uphold them.

But the demon kings do nothing but slander and tear down the precepts and encourage you not to receive them. They praise sexual desire. "It's great," they say. "The more sexual desire you have, the loftier the level of Bodhisattvahood you will realize. Just take Ucchushma, who had to have two to three hundred women a day, but then later cultivated and became Fire-Head Vajra. So what's the problem?" And so they go on. Actually, as soon as he begins praising sexual desire, you should know immediately that he is not a genuine Buddha. As to rage, he says, "Having a temper doesn't matter. The bigger your temper, the bigger your Bodhi. After all, affliction is just Bodhi, so it follows that the more affliction you have, the more Bodhi you'll get. It doesn't matter. Lose your temper whenever you feel like it." The demon king praises rage in this way. "Delusion" just means being stupid and doing things that are upside down. We discussed it earlier:

> *Through a continual process of dullness and slowness, the upside-down state of stupidity occurs in this world. It unites with obstinacy to become eighty-four thousand kinds of random thoughts that are dry and attenuated.*

And the beings without thought turn into earth, wood, metal, or stone. Of course, this doesn't happen to every stupid being. It does happen occasionally, however. But here the demon king praises delusion; he tells you that the stupider you are, the better it is, because if you are stupid it will be easier for him to get you to obey his instructions. You'll fall right in with him. You'll become one of the retinue of the demon kings.

Recently a book came out of India that specializes in praising the tantric practice of men and women cultivating together. This is a book written by demons. Demons praise sexual desire and do not instruct people to put a stop to it. They say that without cutting off sexual desire one can become a Buddha. But Buddhas are pure, whereas the filthiest thing, the most turbid emotion, is sexual desire. In Chinese the word for marriage (*hun* 婚) contains a character which is a combination of the word for "woman" (*nu* 女) and the word for "confusion" (*hun* 昏), or "dark delusion." So the very word marriage itself says that as soon as one gets married, one loses wisdom. One's life is spent as if in perpetual night – in darkness and impurity. It is as if one were sleeping the days away, and when one is asleep, one is totally oblivious to everything. Just that is stupidity. Chinese characters often shed insight on the meanings they represent.

On the other hand, what I just said about marriage is not always the case. You have to be flexible when you view things. You can't be too rigid in your opinions. Although I said that marriage is confusion, you can try to gain understanding within that confusion. You can enter that confusion but not get muddled. Shakyamuni Buddha married, and yet he was the wisest of people.

When you just heard that people who eat the five pungent plants are kissed by ghosts, did it alarm you? If you weren't frightened, then you must see it as no problem. If it alarmed you, then stop eating the five pungent plants. If you don't eat them, the gods and immortals will protect you and the ghosts will leave you alone. If you can marry and stay alert, stay awake, then you won't sink into that confusion. If you enter into the situation, you must not be turned by it. Don't mistake what I said as meaning that I'm opposed to anyone getting married. I'm just exploring a principle.

Sutra:

"When their lives end, these people will join the retinue of demon kings. When they use up their blessings as demons, they will fall into the Unintermittent Hell.

Commentary:

"When their lives end, these people will join the retinue of demon kings." This refers to people who eat the five pungent plants. Because they eat such things, the gods, immortals, Bodhisattvas, and good spirits do not protect them. Therefore, the demon kings who possess great power can have their way with them. The demon king appears as a Buddha and speaks demonic dharma to them, praising sexual desire, anger, and stupidity. Having been confused by the demons, these people lose their proper knowledge and proper views and any real wisdom. Instead, they harbor deviant knowledge and deviant views. The demon king says sexual desire is good, and they believe it. "The Buddha told me so! He said it's no problem." That's called mistaking a thief for one's own son. One mistakes the demon king for the Buddha. Therefore, "When their lives end, these people will join the retinue of demon kings." When their worldly blessings are used up, they die and obediently go over to the retinue of the demon king. **"When they use up their blessings as demons, they will fall into the Unintermittent Hell."** Demons also have their own kind of blessings.

Once there was a cultivator who recited the name of Amitabha Buddha. However, he was particularly greedy, especially for silver and gold. He did recite the Buddha's name, but that's because he had heard that the Land of Ultimate Bliss had ground made of gold, and he figured he could amass a pile of it when he got there. Then one day he saw Amitabha Buddha come. The Buddha said to him, "Today you should be reborn in the Happy Land, and you can take your gold and silver with you." So he put his four or five hundred ounces of gold on the lotus flower that Amitabha Buddha was holding. But before he had a chance to hop on the flower himself, it disappeared, as did the Buddha holding it. "Oh," thought the man, "Amitabha Buddha likes money, too. He's run off with all my gold!" At just about that time, in the household of the donor where he was living, a new-born donkey died. They noticed that the belly of the young donkey was hard and heavy, and when they cut it open, lo and behold, the old cultivator's gold and silver were tucked

away inside.' At that point the old cultivator realized how heavy his greed was, and he rejoiced that he had not gone off with "Amitabha Buddha," for had he gone, he would have become that small donkey. And he knew that the "Amitabha Buddha" who had come was not a genuine state.

Someone wonders, is there really an Amitabha Buddha? Of course there is. But because people have deviant knowledge and deviant views, there are also demons who can appear in the likeness of Amitabha Buddha. Clearly, we should aim to be straight and proper. But how do you do that? Be extremely careful not to be greedy. Anybody who has the idea he can go to the Land of Ultimate Bliss and mine for gold had better wake up fast. Although the Pure Land may be paved with gold, you can't harbor thoughts of self-benefit and make plans to use it as you please. In cultivation, being off by just one thought can bring about demonic karma.

The text says that because people who eat the pungent plants have deviant knowledge and deviant views, they first become demons themselves, and after that they fall into the hells. When will they get out? Nobody knows.

N3 Concludes by calling this practice the foremost increase in vigor.

Sutra:

"Ananda, those who cultivate for Bodhi should never eat the five pungent plants. This is the first of the gradual stages of cultivation.

Commentary:

"**Ananda,** have you been listening? **Those who cultivate for Bodhi–** anybody on the path to Bodhi–**should never eat the five pungent plants.** You definitely must stop eating onions, garlic, leeks, scallions, and chives. If you eat these things, you can end up in the company of the demon kings. If you don't eat these things, you can join the Buddha's retinue. **"This is the first of the gradual stages of cultivation."** This is the first step of progress for a cultivator of the Way. In cultivation, one must get rid of the causes

which aid in the creation of bad karma. The five pungent plants are one cause which aids the demon kings. You should not regard them as unimportant. The five pungent plants make you turbid and confused. They make you impure, and your impurity puts you together with the retinue of demon kings, for the more impure one is, the better they like it.

M2 Revealing the proper nature.
N1 Asks about and answers that first one must cut off lust and killing.

Sutra:

"What is the essence of karmic offenses? Ananda, beings who want to enter samadhi must first firmly uphold the pure precepts.

Commentary:

The first gradual stage consists of getting rid of the aiding causes, which are eating meat and the like. The second gradual stage concerns the essence of karmic offenses. **"What is the essence of karmic offenses? Ananda, beings who want to enter samadhi must first firmly uphold the pure precepts."** The "essence of karmic offenses" refers to the workings of the karmic consciousness. The karmic consciousness must be transformed, and that is done by holding the precepts. "Firmly uphold" means one is firm with oneself. One is not the least bit casual or sloppy. One relies on the precepts in cultivation.

Anything you did before receiving the precepts does not count as a violation of them, because you were in ignorance. If one doesn't know one is committing an offense, then one hasn't committed one. But once you receive the precepts, you can't perpetuate your offenses. Before you heard about the precepts, you may have enjoyed indulging in things which are not in accord with the rules. But once you learn about the precepts, you should receive them and then not indulge in such activities any more.

Sutra:

"They must sever thoughts of lust, not partake of wine or meat, and eat cooked rather than raw foods. Ananda, if cultivators do not sever lust and killing, it will be impossible for them to transcend the triple realm.

Commentary:

"They must sever thoughts of lust." "Lust" refers to love and desire, which are born of ignorance. Love which is not founded on ignorance, in the sense that it is loving regard for one's spouse and children, is not what is meant here. Or, if special causes and conditions arise where one wishes to help someone else, and one is not just selfishly seeking some ephemeral bliss, that too would not be considered a violation, because one's wish is to help someone else and one is basically doing something one would prefer not to do in order to help cross someone else over. It is a temporary expedient and is not a violation.

They must **"not partake of wine or meat."** One should eat pure vegetarian food. What disadvantages are there in wine and meat? Wine and alcohol in general derange one's nature. Once you drink alcohol, you lose your concentration. And then you are likely to do just about anything. You'll be like the man in the story I told before who broke the one precept against intoxicants and subsequently violated all five. If one refrains from drinking, one's nature will not get scattered and one's actions will not be upside down. Another reason is that the odor of wine and other alcoholic drinks, which may be considered fragrant by people and ghosts, upsets the Bodhisattvas and good spirits. They do not like the smell. Bodhisattvas and Arhats regard the smell of wine as we regard the smell of urine. To them it is rank and stinking. People don't like to be around toilets, cesspools, and sewers, but there are certain bugs – dung beetles – who spend their whole lives eating excrement in cesspools and sewers. They like it. Further, wine and meat are aphrodisiacs. So people who cultivate the Way should not consume these things.

They should **“eat cooked rather than raw foods.”** All foods should be cooked, even vegetables, before they are eaten, because almost all raw foods will increase one’s anger. **“Ananda, if cultivators do not sever lust and killing, it will be impossible for them to transcend the Triple Realm.”** “Lust” refers to deviant, improper sexual desire. It is absolutely unprincipled to think that a lustful person could become a Buddha.

N2 And vigorously cultivate the other precepts.

Sutra:

“You should look upon lustful desire as upon a poisonous snake or a resentful bandit. First hold to the Sound-Hearer’s four or eight parajikas in order to control your physical activity; then cultivate the Bodhisattva’s pure regulations in order to control your mental activity.

Commentary:

“You should look upon lustful desire as upon a poisonous snake or a resentful bandit.” Make this contemplation: lust is like a poisonous snake. If it bites you once, you may lose your life. If one regarded lust as being as poisonous as that, one would not be able to take delight in it. Even thoughts of lustful desire would not arise Why? Just imagine that such a thought is as violent as a tiger or wolf. It’s fine if you don’t encounter such animals, but if you do, you’re likely to lose your life. Or look upon such thoughts as upon a rebel or a thief who bears a grudge. His resentment pushes him to the point of murder.

“First hold to the Sound-Hearer’s four or eight Parajikas.” You must keep the Shravaka precepts against killing, stealing, lust, and lying – these apply to both Bhikshus and Bhikshunis; in addition, the precepts against touching, The Eight Matters, covering, and not following apply to Bhikshunis. Keep them **“in order to control your physical activity.”** You uphold these precepts to keep from creating these kinds of karma. **“Then cultivate the Bodhisattva’s pure regulations in order to control**

your mental activity.” Then you cultivate the Bodhisattva Precepts. You receive the Ten Major and Forty-eight Minor Precepts and pay special attention to regulations. Then your mind will not give rise to thoughts of lust. You won’t have such deviant thoughts. This is the path that people who cultivate must walk.

N3 He explains the benefits in detail and concludes with the name.

Sutra:

“When the prohibitive precepts are successfully upheld, one will not create karma that leads to trading places in rebirth and to killing one another in this world. If one does not steal, one will not be indebted, and one will not have to pay back past debts in this world.

Commentary:

“When the prohibitive precepts are successfully upheld.” “Prohibitive” implies the practice of restraint. “Precepts” are defined as “stopping evil and counteracting wrongdoing.” The precepts are divided into four aspects:

1) maintenance;
2) restraint;
3) exceptions;
4) violations.

Sometimes exceptions are made, so that you are not considered to have violated the precept even if you have acted against it. “Restraints,” as already mentioned, refer to prohibitions. They are honored because to violate them would contribute to further violations, as in refraining from taking intoxicants one avoids breaking other precepts as well. “Maintenance” means upholding the precepts and cultivating in accord with them. “Violation” refers to breaking a precept.

The following event will illustrate the aspect of exceptions. Once when the Buddha Shakyamuni was in the world, there were two Bhikshus cultivating in the mountains. One day, one of the

Bhikshus went down the mountain to get food and left the other one sleeping. In India at that time, the Bhikshus simply wore their sashes wrapped around them; they did not wear clothing underneath. This Bhikshu had shed his robe and was sleeping nude. He probably was a lazy person, and with no one on the mountain to watch after him, he'd decided to take a nap.

At that time a woman happened along, and seeing the Bhikshu, she was aroused and took advantage of him. Just as she was running away from the scene, the other Bhikshu returned from town and saw her in flight. Upon investigation he found out that the woman had taken advantage of the sleeping Bhikshu, and he decided to pursue her, catch her, and take her before the Buddha in protest. He took out after her, and the woman became so reckless that she slipped off the road and tumbled down the mountain to her death. So one Bhikshu had violated the precept against sexual activity and the other had broken the precept against killing. Although the Bhikshu hadn't actually pushed her down the mountain, she wouldn't have fallen if he hadn't been pursuing her.

"What a mess!" concluded the two Bhikshus. Messy as it was, they had to go before the Buddha and describe their offenses. The Buddha referred them to the Venerable Upali. But when Venerable Upali heard the details, his verdict was that, indeed, one had violated the precept against sexual activity and the other against killing, offenses which cannot be absolved. "You're both going to have to endure the hells in the future," he concluded.

Hearing this, the two Bhikshus wept, and they went about everywhere trying to find someone who could help them. Eventually, they found the Great Upasaka Vimalakirti, who asked why they were crying. When they had related their tale, he pronounced his judgment that they had not violated the precepts. "If you can be repentant, he said, "then I can certify that you didn't break the precepts."

"How can that be?" they asked.

"The nature of offenses is basically empty," replied the Upasaka. "You did not violate the precepts intentionally, and so it doesn't count. It is an exception."

Hearing this explanation by the Great Teacher Vimalakirti, the two Bhikshus were enlightened on the spot and were certified as attaining the fruition. After that, they became Arhats. So there are many explanations within the prohibitive precepts. But if people always look to the exceptions, they will simply not hold the precepts. They will beg the question. So the Buddha did not speak much about this aspect.

If one upholds the precepts, **"One will not create karma that leads to trading places in rebirth and to killing one another in this world."** One is born and then kills, and the victim is reborn and kills the one who killed him. But now karmic offenses created in the cycle of mutual rebirth and mutual killing cease. **"If one does not steal, one will not be indebted, and one will not have to pay back past debts in this world."** The offenses of stealing will also cease when one stops stealing. "I won't take your things, and you won't take mine. I won't eat your flesh, and you won't eat mine. I won't become indebted to you, and you won't become indebted to me. In that way we won't have to pay each other back." You won't have to pay back the debts for offenses committed in the past once you sever your relationship with animals by not eating meat. If you don't eat their flesh, then you don't have any connections with them.

Sutra:

"If people who are pure in this way cultivate samadhi, they will naturally be able to contemplate the extent of the worlds of the ten directions with the physical body given them by their parents; without need of the heavenly eye, they will see the Buddhas speaking dharma and receive in person the sagely instruction. Obtaining spiritual penetrations, they will roam through the ten directions, gain clarity regarding past lives, and will not encounter difficulties and dangers.

Commentary:

“If people who are pure in this way, who do not eat the five pungent plants, do not drink intoxicants, and do not eat meat, and can firmly uphold the four or the eight Parajikas – the precepts – if such people **cultivate samadhi, they will naturally be able to contemplate the extent of the worlds of the ten directions with the physical body given them by their parents; without need of the heavenly eye.”** They don’t need to have the power of the heavenly eye in order to spontaneously see all around them. **“They will see the Buddhas speaking dharma and receive in person the sagely instruction.”** They will be able to encounter the Buddhas and hear the Dharma. They will receive in person the Buddhas’ compassionate guidance. **“Obtaining spiritual penetrations, they will roam through the ten directions, gain clarity regarding past lives, and will not encounter difficulties and dangers.”** Their spiritual powers will enable them to go through the ten directions while in this place. They will obtain the knowledge of past lives. They accomplish these things with their physical bodies. Although they haven’t obtained the power of the heavenly eye, it is as if they had. The same is true for the power of the heavenly ear. They’ll never get into difficult situations or find themselves in dangerous positions.

Sutra:

“This is the second of the gradual stages of cultivation.

Commentary:

What has been discussed is the need to cut out the essence of karmic offenses. One must rectify one’s karma. Until now it has not been proper, and so one must work in Order to change. One must guard and uphold the precepts and rules. Just that, the maintaining of precepts, **“is the second of the gradual stages of cultivation.”**

M3 Tells them they should counter the manifestations of their karma.
N1 He asks about and answers that based on the precepts one should cultivate samadhi.

Sutra:

"What is the manifestation of karma? Ananda, such people as these, who are pure and who uphold the prohibitive precepts, do not have thoughts of greed and lust, and so they do not become dissipated in the pursuit of the six external defiling sense-objects.

Commentary:

We first discussed the causes that aid in the creation of karma. Next we talked about rectifying the nature of the karmic consciousness which creates offenses. Now the discussion turns to the manifestation of karma. **"What is the manifestation of karma?"** It is the karma created in this very life. We must counteract it; oppose it. We should not allow ourselves to succumb to the creation of new karma. We should return; we should turn back from it. **"Ananda, such people as these, who are pure and who uphold the prohibitive precepts, do not have thoughts of greed and lust."** This refers to the people we have been discussing, who at this stage are pure and keep the precepts. These people are not greedy for the false and illusory bliss of sexual desire, **"and so they do not become dissipated in the pursuit of the six external defiling sense-objects."** They are not turned by the experience of the six sense-objects of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables, and dharmas. They return the light and come back home.

Sutra:

"Because they do not pursue them, they turn around to their own source. Without the conditions of the defiling objects, there is nothing for the sense-organs to match themselves with, and so they reverse their flow, become one unit, and no longer function in six ways.

Commentary:

“Because they do not pursue them, they turn around to their own source.” They are not turned by the six sense-objects, and so they go back to the origin. They return the light and illumine within, and turn back their hearing to hear their self-nature. They cultivate the perfect penetration of the ear. **“Without the conditions of the defiling objects, there is nothing for the sense-organs to match themselves with.”** They no longer have any connection with the six sense-objects. The relationship between them is severed when people stop pursuing them, and so the sense-organs no longer are matched with the sense-objects, **“and so they reverse their flow.”** That refers to the cultivation of the perfect penetration of the ear, whereby one enters the flow and forgets the place of entry. They **“become one unit”**; the six organs are inter-penetrated and function together. They **“no longer function in six ways.”** The six sense organs no longer are dissipated in their pursuit of the experiences of the six sense-objects.

N2 In conclusion he explains this is obtaining patience with the non-production of dharmas.

Sutra:

“All the lands of the ten directions are as brilliantly clear and pure as moonlight reflected in crystal.

Commentary:

At that time, **“all the lands of the ten directions are as brilliantly clear and pure as moonlight reflected in crystal.”** In other words, they are transparently clear and Visible to all.

Sutra:

“Their bodies and minds are blissful as they experience the equality of wonderful perfection, and they attain great peace.

Commentary:

“When the crystal captures the light of the full moon, there is both brilliance and transparency. It can be completely seen through.

This analogy represents the state of cultivators who have reached the level where both their bodies and minds are pure. At that point, **"Their bodies and minds are blissful as they experience the equality of wonderful perfection, and they attain great peace."** This sense of peace is something one experiences oneself, not something that is evident to others.

Sutra:

"The secret perfection and pure wonder of all the Thus Come Ones appear before them.

Commentary:

"The secret perfection and pure wonder of all the Thus Come Ones" refers to the Buddha's Pure Dharma nature. At this point they **"appear before them."** A cultivator such as this can experience this state.

Sutra:

"These people then obtain patience with the non-production of dharmas. They thereupon gradually cultivate according to their practices, until they reside securely in the sagely positions.

Commentary:

"These people then obtain patience with the non-production of dharmas." What is meant by patience with the non-production of dharmas? One does not see the slightest dharma arise, nor the slightest dharma extinguished. Dharmas are neither produced nor destroyed. But it is not easy to obtain this state. **"They thereupon gradually cultivate according to their practices, until they reside securely in the sagely positions."** From the point of attaining patience with the non-production of dharmas, they gradually progress in their practice as they go through the sagely positions, without being shaken or moved.

N3 He concludes with the name: because of the gradual one can enter into the sudden.

Sutra:

"This is the third of the gradual stages of cultivation.

Commentary:

"This is the third of the gradual stages of cultivation," that of preventing the manifestation of karma.

CHAPTER 2

The Bodhisattva Stages

J2 The single position of dry-wisdom.

Sutra:

"Ananda, these good people's emotional love and desire are withered and dry, the sense-organs and sense objects no longer match, and so the residual habits do not continue to arise.

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha calls out, **"Ananda, these good people's emotional love and desire are withered and dry."** The people referred to are the ones who have passed through the three gradual stages just discussed. "Withered and dry" means that they have no thoughts of emotional desire and love. **"The sense-organs and sense objects no longer match."** The six sense organs no longer seek to match up with the six sense-objects. **"And so the residual habits do not continue to arise."** "Residual habits" refers to the slight bit of ignorance that these people still harbor. Since the ignorance is so slight, it does not continue to increase.

Sutra:

"By means of their complete wisdom, they understand that attachments of the mind are false. The bright perfection of their

wisdom-nature shines throughout the ten directions, and this initial wisdom is called the 'stage of dry wisdom.'

Commentary:

The slight bit of ignorance that still remains does not grow and increase. The karmic obstacles are also very few, and so **"by means of their complete wisdom, they understand that attachments of the mind are false."** Their minds become as clear as emptiness itself. Their own natures experience the perfection of wisdom. "Complete wisdom" means they don't have any other false thoughts. The thoughts in their mind are brought forth from wisdom. **"The bright perfection of their wisdom-nature shines throughout the ten directions."** The nature of their wisdom is light and full. **"And this initial wisdom is called the 'stage of dry wisdom'."** Since emotional love and desire are "dried up," all that's left is wisdom. This stage of dry wisdom is also called "the initial thought of vajra." "Vajra" means "indestructible." This stage is the first step towards the point of being like vajra.

What follows is a discussion of the fifty-five stages of a Bodhisattva.

1. The Ten Faiths;
2. The Ten Dwellings;
3. The Ten Conducts;
4. The Ten Transferences;
5. The Four Levels of Augmenting Practice:
   a) Heat,
   b) Summit,
   c) Patience,
   d) Foremost in the World;
6. The Ten Grounds;
7. Equal Enlightenment.

Sutra:

"Although the habits of desire are initially dried up, they still have not merged with the Thus Come One's flow of Dharma-water.

Commentary:

"**Although the habits of desire** and emotional love **are initially dried up, they still have not merged with the Thus Come One's flow of Dharma-water."** Here the "flow of Dharma-water" does not refer to Dharma which is spoken. It is the water of Dharma that flows forth from the self-nature. But at this point in their development, they have not merged with the water of genuine wisdom.

The Ten Faiths

J3 The ten positions of the ten faiths.
K1 The mind that resides in faith.

Sutra:

"Then, with this mind centered on the middle, they enter the flow where wonderful perfection reveals itself. From the truth of that wonderful perfection there repeatedly arise wonders of truth. They always dwell in the wonder of faith, until all false thinking is completely eliminated and the middle way is totally true. This is called 'the Mind that Resides in Faith.'

Commentary:

This begins the discussion on the Ten Faiths:

1. The Mind that Resides in Faith;
2. The Mind that Resides in Mindfulness;
3. The Mind that Resides in Vigor;
4. The Mind that Resides in Wisdom;
5. The Mind that Resides in Samadhi;
6. The Mind that Resides in Irreversibility;
7. The Mind that Resides in Protecting the Dharma;
8. The Mind that Resides in Making Transferences;
9. The Mind that Resides in the Precepts;
10. The Mind that Resides in Vows.

“Then, with this mind centered on the middle, they enter the flow where wonderful perfection reveals itself.” “This mind” refers to the mind at the level of dry wisdom, the initial vajra-mind. They use this mind to enter the flow of the Buddhadharma, and they reach the state where “wonderful perfection reveals itself,” where it opens out in abundance. One reaches the principle and substance of True Suchness. **“From the truth of that wonderful perfection there repeatedly arise wonders of truth.”** In the wonderful perfection of the True Suchness of the self-nature, truths within truths come forth. **“They always dwell in the wonder of faith, until all false thinking is completely eliminated and the middle way is totally true.”** Their belief becomes more and more subtle and wonderful. “Always dwell” means that they will not waver, they will not change their minds. Their faith is constant. At that point, all false thinking goes away, without exception. Even if they wanted to have false thoughts, the false thoughts just wouldn’t arise. That is because false thoughts are helped out by ignorance. With false thoughts come love and desire. But now love and desire have been dried up and only a little ignorance remains, so that, quite naturally, they don’t have false thoughts.

Why do you have false thinking? It is because you still have love and desire. There are things that you are greedy for. The desires compel you to think about this and that, so that your mind is always climbing on conditions. If people didn’t have any greed, they wouldn’t have any false thinking.

At this point in their cultivation, these people don’t have false thinking. When that happens, one attains the nature of the principle of the Middle Way. It is “totally true,” which means that there is no love and desire, no greedy false thoughts. **“This is called ‘the Mind that Resides in Faith.’”** This is the first of these ten positions. One brings forth genuine faith and dwells in it.

K2 The mind that resides in mindfulness.

Sutra:

“When true faith is clearly understood, then perfect penetration is total, and the three aspects of skandhas, places, and realms are no longer obstructions. Then all their habits throughout innumerable kalpas of past and future, during which they abandon bodies and receive bodies, appear to them now in the present moment. These good people can remember everything and forget nothing. This is called ‘the Mind that Resides in Mindfulness’.

Commentary:

Prior to this stage, when they were residing in the mind of faith, they cultivated the Middle Way – that wonderful perfection, the principle which one neither enters into nor departs from. Now, since they are replete with faith, **“true faith is clearly understood.”** Once one has true faith one can gain true wisdom. “Clear understanding,” then, refers to that true wisdom. **“Then perfect penetration is total, and the three aspects of skandhas, places, and realms are no longer obstructions.”** Not only do they accomplish the perfect penetration of the sense organs, but of everything else as well – the five skandhas of form, feeling, thought, activity, and consciousness; the twelve places of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, together with forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, and dharmas and the eighteen realms, which-include the six sense-organs, the six sense-objects and the consciousnesses which connect them, that is, the eye-consciousness, the ear-consciousness, the nose-consciousness, the tongue-consciousness, the body-consciousness, and the mind-consciousness. Once you obtain perfect penetration, these things can no longer hinder you. **“Then all their habits throughout innumerable kalpas of past and future, during which they abandon bodies and receive bodies, appear to them now in the present moment.”** For time beyond calculation they have been undergoing rebirth and will continue to undergo rebirth – birth after

birth, death upon death. And in each one of those lives, they have different habits. In one life they got into the habit of drinking wine. In another life they were in the habit of smoking. In another life, they were habitual gamblers. Another life found them with habits of lust. In another life they killed. Another life made them into thieves. In one life, they got into the habit of lying. In general, life after life, they developed habits that led them to do all kinds of bad things. That's looking at the bad habits. But there are also good habits. In one life, they got into the habit of bowing to the Buddhas. In another life, they habitually recited the Shurangama Mantra. In one life, they had the habit of listening to the explanation of the *Shurangama Sutra*. In another life, they habitually listened to the *Lotus Sutra*. In general, throughout all those lives in so many kalpas, they walked many paths. As a result, they had accumulated a tremendous number of habits. But now, just like a movie, all those habits appear before them. **"These good people can remember everything and forget nothing."** These good people who are cultivating the Way can bring it all to mind. They can remember it all. When they attain that state, they never forget. That means they always have their mind on what's happening. They are always mindful of those causes and conditions. **"This is called the Mind that Resides in Mindfulness,"** the second of the Ten Faiths.

K3 The mind that resides in vigor.

Sutra:

"When the wonderful perfection is completely true, that essential truth brings about a transformation. They go beyond the beginningless habits to reach the one essential brightness. Relying solely on this essential brightness, they progress toward true purity. This is called the Mind of Vigor.

Commentary:

"When the wonderful perfection is completely true, that essential truth brings about a transformation. They go beyond the beginningless habits to reach the one essential brightness, which is wisdom. **Relying solely on this essential brightness,**

they progress toward true purity.” Their vigor takes them to a place of true purity which is devoid of any defilement. **“This is called the Mind of Vigor,”** the mind that resides in vigor.

K4 The mind that resides in wisdom.

Sutra:

“The essence of the mind reveals itself as total wisdom; this is called the Mind that Resides in Wisdom.

Commentary:

When one has progressed until the mind is truly pure, then **the essence of the mind reveals itself as total wisdom.** The mind is clear and understood, which means one has some genuine wisdom. “Total wisdom” means that there is not the least bit of random thinking remaining. The stupidity and false thoughts are all cone. Remember that this was described above, in the passage on the first dwelling of the mind, where it said that “all false thinking is completely eliminated.” **“This is called the Mind that Resides in Wisdom.”** This is the dwelling of the mind of faith in wisdom.

K5 The mind that resides in samadhi.

Sutra:

“As the wisdom and brightness are held steadfast, a profound stillness pervades. The stage at which the majesty of this stillness becomes constant and solid is called the Mind that Resides in Samadhi.

Commentary:

“As the wisdom and brightness are held steadfast, a profound stillness pervades.” This means that you must hold onto the light of wisdom and not let it go slack. Then there is a profound stillness that extends throughout the Dharma Realm. **“The stage at which the majesty of this stillness becomes constant and solid is called the Mind that Resides in Samadhi.”** The “profound stillness” represents what is “tranquil and eternally illumining,” and the “majesty of this stillness” represents what is “illumining

and eternally tranquil." "Solid" here refers to the solidifying of the water of wisdom. It had been shallower before; now it deepens. "Solid" represents samadhi-power. At this point, one will not be moved. One would not say, "That looks good," and run in that direction, and then say, "But that looks even better," and run to the next thing. One would not be always pursuing something better. If one had samadhi-power, one would not run about hither and thither. A wind out of the east would not bend one westward; nor would a west wind blow one eastward. That just means that one would not be moved by the Eight Winds.

In order to tell about the Eight Winds, we must talk about the famous Sung Dynasty scholar and poet Su Tung P'o. He was known as Layman Tung P'o and he carried on a dialogue with Dhyana Master Fo Yin. The former lived on the south bank of the Long River (Yang Tze) at Chen Chiang, and the latter on the north bank of the river.

The poet Su Tung P'o meditated and cultivated, and one day in meditation he saw a state that moved him to write a verse. The verse went:

I bow my head to the God among gods.
And a ray of light illumines the great thousand worlds.
The Eight Winds cannot move me,
As I sit aloft a purple golden lotus.

The "God among gods" refers to the Buddha. The poet claimed that when he bowed to the Buddha, he emitted a light that went throughout the universe. The "Eight Winds" are:

1. praise;
2. ridicule;
3. suffering;
4. bliss;
5. benefit;
6. destruction;

7. gain;
8. loss.

“Praise” is someone’s saying things like, “You are an excellent student. You really apply yourself. You have a fine personality and a good moral character.” But you shouldn’t look upon praise as something good, because if you are moved by it, you just prove that you don’t have any samadhi-power. The Eight Winds are difficult for cultivators to bear.

“Ridicule” means to chide or tease or use sarcasm. It’s to use words in such a way as to break a person down. It may sound like praise but it’s thick with sarcasm. This wind can cause one to lose one’s temper. “How can you treat me like that!” is a typical reaction.

“Suffering” in all its manifold aspects is also one of the winds, as is “bliss.” You may feel good, but you should not think that it’s a great thing, because as soon as your mind moves to acknowledge the pleasure, a wind has moved you.

“Benefit” refers to something that will help you out. “Destruction” means something unbeneficial which is bad for you. “Gain” refers to getting something, “loss” to losing it. Getting something makes you happy; losing something upsets you. For instance, a person buys the latest model of a very fancy radio. He’s so taken with it that he even dreams about it at night. Or maybe it’s a camera or a telescope. In general, just imagine the thing that you are most fond of: buying it is what is meant by “gain.” But once you have it, of course, other people find it attractive, too, and who would have guessed that someone would wait until you are a bit careless and steal it from you? At that point, your ignorance arises and you are afflicted by your loss. That’s to be moved by the Eight Winds.

But Su Tung P’o said that the Eight Winds did not move him as he sat aloft a purple golden lotus. He had his servant take the poem to Ch’an Master Fo Yin for his critique.

Ch'an Master Fo Yin scribbled two words across the poem. The two words were very meaningful, but Su Tung P'o couldn't handle them. He exploded in a rage as soon as he glanced at them. What were the words? "Fart, fart."

Su Tung P'o grabbed the poem, threw on his coat, and stormed across the river to confront Ch'an Master Fo Yin.

"What kind of bad-mouthed monk are you?" he demanded of the Ch'an Master. "What right do you have to scold people like that?"

"But you said the Eight Winds would not move you," Ch'an Master Fo Yin replied calmly. "How is it that my two little farts have blown you all the way across the river?"

Thinking it over, Su Tung P'o saw how right the Ch'an Master was, and so he hung his head and went back home.

K6 The mind that resides in irreversibility.

Sutra:

"The light of samadhi emits brightness. When the essence of the brightness enters deeply within, they only advance and never retreat. This is called the Mind of Irreversibility.

Commentary:

Once the mind resides in samadhi, **"The light of samadhi emits brightness. When the essence of the brightness enters deeply within** these good people who are cultivating, **they only advance and never retreat."** Since they understand, their only intent is to progress, and they never turn around and go back. The reason they are irreversible is that they truly and genuinely understand. They have real wisdom. **"This is called the Mind of Irreversibility."** the mind of faith that never retreats.

K7 The mind that resides in protecting the dharma.

Sutra:

“When the progress of their minds is secure, and they hold their minds and protect them without loss, they connect with the life-breath of the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions. This is called the Mind that Protects the Dharma.

Commentary:

“When the progress of their minds is secure,” they go ever forward; they never fly off the handle. They are firm and at peace, “**and they hold their minds and protect them without loss**, so that their minds never retreat. Then **they connect with the life-breath of the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions.”** When one reaches the point of irreversibility, the energy-force of the Buddhas unites with one’s own. **“This is called the Mind that Protects the Dharma.”** This means that the Buddhas protect you, and you protect the Buddhadharma. With the Buddha’s protection, you can accomplish your karma in the Way. With your protection, the Buddhadharma can spread and grow. So this is the mind of faith protects the dharma.

K8 The mind that resides in making transferences.

Sutra:

“Protecting their light of enlightenment, they can use this wonderful force to return to the Buddha’s light of compassion and to come back to stand firm with the Buddha. It is like two mirrors that are set facing one another, so that between them the exquisite images interreflect and enter into one another layer upon layer. This is called the Mind of Transference.

Commentary:

“Protecting their light of enlightenment, they can use this wonderful force.” To join with the life-breath of the Buddha is a kind of enlightenment. When protected, this enlightenment is replete with wisdom and intelligence which is without loss. These

people can “**return to the Buddha’s light of compassion and to come back to stand firm with the Buddha.**” With this subtle wonderful power, you can unite with the Buddha’s bright compassion. Your life-breath and light interact with the Buddha’s life-breath and light, **“like two mirrors that are set facing one another, so that between them the exquisite images interreflect and enter into one another layer upon layer.”** When two mirrors are placed opposite one another, their images interreflect repeatedly. They display infinite layers of intereflection. “**This is called the Mind of Transference**,” the mind of faith that dwells in transference of merit.

K9 The mind that resides in precepts.

Sutra:

“With this secret interplay of light, they obtain the Buddha’s eternal solidity and unsurpassed wonderful purity. Dwelling in the unconditioned, they know no loss or dissipation. This is called the Mind that Resides in Precepts.

Commentary:

“With this secret interplay of light, they obtain the Buddha’s eternal solidity and unsurpassed wonderful purity.” At this point, there is a hidden connection between the light of your mind and the light of the Buddha’s mind; that is what is meant by the “secret interplay of light.” The light of your heart reaches to the Buddha’s light, and the Buddha’s light reaches to your heart. After the light of the Buddha has entered your heart, it returns to the Buddha. After the light of your mind has entered the Buddha’s mind, it returns to your own mind. This interplay of light goes full circle. One thus obtains a constant illumination from the Buddha. In fact, one simply becomes one with the Buddha. This purity is incomparable. Nothing surpasses it. **“Dwelling in the unconditioned, they know no loss or dissipation.”** One has obtained the unconditioned Dharmas, and no loss can occur. **“This is called the Mind that Resides in Precepts.”**

K10 The mind that resides in vows.

Sutra:

“Abiding in the precepts with self-mastery, they can roam throughout the ten directions, going anywhere they wish. This is called the Mind that Resides in Vows.

Commentary:

“**Abiding in the precepts –** the unsurpassed Vajra Bright Jeweled Precepts – **with self-mastery** and spiritual penetrations, **they can roam throughout the ten directions, going anywhere they wish.**” Such spiritual penetrations come with freedom and ease. There is no need for mental exertion, no need to set one’s mind to it in order to be able to go anywhere in the ten directions. They can go anywhere they wish without any hindrance. **“This is called the Mind that Resides in Vows.”** Whatever wish or vow you make can be fulfilled.

The Ten Dwellings

J4 The ten positions of the ten dwellings.
K1 Dwelling of bringing forth the resolve.

Sutra:

"Ananda, these good people use honest expedients to bring forth those ten minds. When the essence of these minds becomes dazzling, and the ten functions interconnect, then a single mind is perfectly accomplished. This is called the Dwellings of Bringing Forth the Resolve.

Commentary:

This section of text discusses the Ten Dwellings, which are part of the Bodhisattva stages. The Ten Dwellings are:

1) The Dwelling of Bringing Forth the Resolve;
2) The Dwelling of the Ground of Regulation;
3) The Dwelling of Cultivation;
4) The Dwelling of Noble Birth;
5) The Dwelling of Endowment with Skill-in-Means;
6) The Dwelling of Rectification of the Mind;
7) The Dwelling of Irreversibility;
8) The Dwelling of a Pure Youth;
9) The Dwelling of a Dharma Prince;
10) The Dwelling of Anointing the Crown of the Head.

At this stage, the Bodhisattva is about to reach the position of a Buddha, but isn't there yet. So the Bodhisattva temporarily abides in these dwellings.

"Ananda," the Buddha calls out, "**These good people**, these Bodhisattvas who are cultivating the Way, **use honest expedients to bring forth those ten minds.**" The "Ten Minds" are the ten stages just discussed. **"When the essence of these minds becomes dazzling, and the ten functions interconnect, then a single mind is perfectly accomplished."** The "ten functions" refer to the ways in which the Ten Minds are used. When they interconnect, they all come back to one single mind. **"This is called the Dwellings of Bringing Forth the Resolve,"** the first of the Ten Dwellings.

K2 Dwelling of the ground of regulation.

Sutra:

"From within this mind light comes forth like pure crystal, which reveals pure gold inside. Treading upon the previous wonderful mind as a ground is called the Dwelling of the Ground of Regulation.

Commentary:

"**From within this mind light comes forth like pure crystal.** It is transparent and **which reveals pure gold inside. Treading upon the previous wonderful mind as a ground is called the Dwelling of the Ground of Regulation.**" The "previous wonderful mind" is the Dwelling of Bringing Forth the Resolve, where the functions of the ten earlier minds unite into a single mind. Then one walks upon this wonderful mind and turns it into a ground. This is the second dwelling, that of the Ground of Regulation.

K3 Dwelling of cultivation.

Sutra:

"When the mind-ground connects with wisdom, both become bright and comprehensive. Traversing the ten

directions then without obstruction is called the Dwelling of Cultivation.

Commentary:

This is the Third Dwelling, that of Cultivation. **"When the mind-ground connects with wisdom, both become bright and comprehensive."** When the mind-ground you tread upon becomes level, it unites with wisdom, and both the mind and the wisdom are extremely clear and lucid. **"Traversing the ten directions then without obstruction is called the Dwelling of Cultivation."** At this point you gain spiritual penetrations. Endowed with both wisdom and spiritual penetrations, you are not hindered from going anywhere at all in the ten directions. You can come and go as you please.

K4 Dwelling of noble birth.

Sutra:

"When their conduct is the same as the Buddhas' and they take on the demeanor of a Buddha, then, like the intermediate skandha body searching for a father and mother, they penetrate the darkness with a hidden trust and enter the lineage of the Thus Come One. This is called the Dwelling of Noble Birth.

Commentary:

This passage discusses the Bodhisattvas of the fourth dwelling, the Dwelling of Noble Birth. It means being born in the household of the Dharma King, the home of the Buddha. The Buddha's family is the most honorable, and so this dwelling is called "noble birth."

"When their conduct is the same as the Buddhas' and they take on the demeanor of a Buddha," they are at the stage of the fourth dwelling. Everything the Bodhisattvas of the fourth dwelling do is like what a Buddha would do. Those Bodhisattvas have taken on the demeanor of a Buddha. They have learned to be just like Buddhas. "**Then** they are **like the intermediate skandha body searching for a father and mother.**" We have discussed the meaning of "intermediate skandha body" before. It refers to our

"soul," or efficacious nature, which transmigrates. The definition of the intermediate skandha body is that which exists,

> *Before a new set of five skandhas is taken on,*
> *But after the old set of five skandhas is gone.*

An intermediate skandha body – the body between the skandhas-lives in a world as black as ink. There is no light for it at all. Although the sun and moon are still there, the skandha body dares not look at them when they appear. And when they are not in evidence and the skandha body is conscious, there is total darkness wherever it looks. However, when its future parents engage in intercourse, then no matter how far away from them the intermediate skandha body may be, it perceives a bit of *yin* light, and it reaches the spot immediately in response to its thought. Its compulsion to reach that place is like that of iron filings toward a magnet. But in this case, the force, as it were, of the magnetic field extends for thousands of miles. Attracted in this way, the intermediate skandha body arrives, and rebirth immediately takes place: conception occurs.

Here the birth of the Bodhisattva of the fourth dwelling into the household of the Buddha is likened to this process, but this is only an analogy, of course. It is used to describe the force of attraction that brings these Bodhisattvas to birth in the household of the Dharma King. **"They penetrate the darkness with a hidden trust."** No matter how many thousands of miles away it may be, it is as if there is a mutual connection based on faith. The Bodhisattvas in this way **"enter the lineage of the Thus Come One. This is called the Dwelling of Noble Birth."** They are born into an honorable and wealthy household, the Buddha's home.

"Oh?" you wonder. "The Buddha has a home? I thought the Buddha had left home." The home referred to here is just the home of leaving home. It is the place where the Buddha dwells. This is all just an analogy.

K5 Dwelling of endowment with skill-in-means.

Sutra:

“Since they ride in the womb of the Way and will themselves become enlightened heirs, their human features are in no way deficient. This is called the Dwelling of Endowment with Skill-in-Means.

Commentary:

“Since they ride in the womb of the Way”: they roam in household of the Buddha; they are carried, as it were, in the womb of the Way. “**And** they **will themselves become enlightened heirs.**” They have received the bequest of enlightenment. **“Their human features are in no way deficient.”** Their eyes, ears, nose, and other characteristics are perfect and full. Their appearance as Buddhas, as Bodhisattvas, will also be without deficiency. **“This is called the Dwelling of Endowment with Skill-in-Means.”** This is the fifth.

K6 Dwelling of the rectification of the mind.

Sutra:

“With a physical appearance like that of a Buddha and a mind that is the same as well, they are said to be Dwelling in the Rectification of the Mind.

Commentary:

At this point the Bodhisattvas of the sixth dwelling have **“a physical appearance like that of a Buddha.”** Their features are replete with the thirty-two hallmarks and eighty Subtle characteristics. They also have **“a mind that is the same”** as the Buddhas’. Then **“they are said to be Dwelling in the Rectification of the Mind,”** the sixth dwell inn.

K7 Dwelling of irreversibility.

Sutra:

“United in body and mind, they easily grow and mature day by day. This is called the Dwelling of Irreversibility.

Commentary:

Their body and mind are the same as the Buddhas’. “They have **united** with the Buddhas and **easily grow and mature day by day.**” Although they resemble the Buddhas, they are like children who have not yet grown up. This means that at this level the wisdom of these Bodhisattvas is not yet as great as a Buddha’s. They are like newborn children. But every day their wisdom grows, so they are not far from Buddhahood. They are courageous and vigorous, and so **“this is called the Dwelling of Irreversibility.”** At this point they do not turn back. They have reached the seventh dwelling and will not retreat hereafter.

K8 Dwelling of a pure youth.

Sutra:

“With the efficacious appearance of ten bodies, which are simultaneously perfected, they are said to be at the Dwelling of a Pure Youth.

Commentary:

At this stage, the Bodhisattva can make ten bodies appear all at the same time. Each of these ten bodies can produce ten more bodies in turn, so that a hundred bodies come into being. Each of these hundred bodies brings forth yet another ten bodies, making a thousand bodies in all. This all happens simultaneously due to the magnitude of the Bodhisattva’s spiritual penetrations. This is called the “Dwelling of a Pure Youth.”

K9 Dwelling of a dharma prince.

Sutra:

"Completely developed, they leave the womb and become sons of the Buddha. This is called the Dwelling of a Dharma Prince.

Commentary:

The ninth is the Dwelling of a Dharma Prince. At the previous level, when the ten bodies efficaciously appeared, they were able to change and transform endlessly. However, the Bodhisattvas have still not become genuine Dharma Princes. In the analogy, they have not yet left the womb. Now, "completely developed," with the appearance of great heroes, **"they leave the womb and become sons of the Buddha."** The accomplishment of the body of a Buddha is likened in the analogy to birth from the womb. **"This is called the Dwelling of a Dharma Prince."** They themselves are now sons of the Buddha. That describes the Bodhisattva at the ninth dwelling.

K10 Dwelling of anointing the crown of the head.

Sutra:

"Reaching the fullness of adulthood, they are like the chosen prince to whom the great king of a country turns over the affairs of state. When this Kshatriya king's eldest son is ceremoniously anointed on the crown of the head, he has reached what is called the Dwelling of Anointing the Crown of the Head.

Commentary:

"Reaching the fullness of adulthood, they are like the chosen prince to whom the great king of a country turns over the affairs of state." A "great king" refers to a wheel-turning sage-king. When such a king is ready to relinquish the duties of the throne to his son, he performs a ritual in which he anoints the crown of the prince's head with the waters of the four seas. When this ceremony is completed, the prince is said to have inherited the

throne. Here the passage refers to the Bodhisattva who can become the son of the Buddha, who is the Dharma King. At this point the Buddha anoints the crown of the Bodhisattva's head, making him a full-fledged Bodhisattva. That's what's meant by the passage, "**When this Kshatriya king's,** the Buddha's, **eldest son,** the Bodhisattva of the tenth dwelling, **is ceremoniously anointed on the crown of the head, he has reached what is called the Dwelling of Anointing the Crown of the Head.**"

The Ten Conducts

J5 The ten positions of the ten conducts.
K1 The conduct of happiness.

Sutra:

"Ananda, after these good men have become sons of the Buddha, they are replete with the limitlessly many wonderful virtues of the Thus Come Ones, and they comply and accord with beings throughout the ten directions. This is called the Conduct of Happiness.

Commentary:

These are called the Ten Conducts. They are the next step in the stages of a Bodhisattva:

1) the Conduct of Happiness,
2) the Conduct of Benefiting,
3) the Conduct of Non-Opposition,
4) the Conduct of Endlessness.
5) the Conduct of Freedom from Deluded Confusion.
6) the Conduct of Wholesome Manifestation.
7) the Conduct of Non-Attachment.
8) the Conduct of Veneration,
9) the Conduct of Wholesome Dharma.
10) the Conduct of True Actuality.

Now we will discuss the first conduct, that of happiness. These Ten Conducts correspond to the Ten Perfections, the Ten Paramitas, so the first conduct relates to giving.

Shakyamuni Buddha called out, **“Ananda, after these good men have become sons of the Buddha, they are replete with the limitlessly many wonderful virtues of the Thus Come Ones.”** The crown of their heads are anointed, and they become sons of the Buddha. They are well on their way to possessing the virtuous conducts of a Buddha. They **“comply and accord with beings throughout the ten directions. This is called the Conduct of Happiness.”** To “comply and accord” means to practice giving. We have discussed giving many times and have mentioned that there are three kinds of giving:

1) the giving of wealth.
2) the giving of Dharma.
3) the giving of fearlessness.

However, there are also two aspects to giving, which are not the same as the three kinds. The two aspects comprise another explanation entirely. Since it is called the Conduct of Happiness, the first aspect is that one should practice giving with a happy heart. One should enjoy giving. It’s not that one decides to give only under duress; it’s not forced, such that on the one hand one wants to give, but on the other hand one doesn’t want to. It’s not that one is indecisive, thinking, “I’d like to make a gift, but it’s my money…” It’s said that giving up some money is like cutting off a piece of one’s flesh. On the other hand, one knows that if one does not practice giving, one will not generate any merit. So it’s a real dilemma: if one gives, one fears one will have no money left; if one doesn’t give, one fears one will have no merit. So there one stands, not knowing whether to take a step forward or backward. That’s certainly not called the Conduct of happiness. That’s more like the conduct of forcing it. Now you can’t say that there wouldn’t be any merit in this kind of giving, but the merit certainly would be

depleted by the internal struggle. One is not doing it with a true mind.

Rather, one should he happy about the giving one does. Even if it means one must do without money oneself, one should be happy to give away to others whatever one has.

The second aspect of giving is that one should make living beings happy. When you practice giving, you should not act like someone tossing crumbs to a beggar. It shouldn't be that they have to come crawling to your door crying, "Old uncle, old auntie, can't you spare a little?" only to have you open the door a crack, throw out a dime or a quarter, and shout, "Take it and get out:" That can't even be called giving. There's no merit in that kind of act, and certainly the person on the receiving end will not be happy. In China there's the phrase: "One doesn't eat what is rudely offered." That's just what's been described above. People with any self-possession will not accept food or money that is offered in that way, even if they have to go hungry.

One should give sincerely and in good faith. But be careful not to give in such a way that one expects gratitude in response. If you avoid doing it in a way that makes people feel they must thank you, then you are giving in a way that causes people to be happy, which is the second aspect of giving. In the Conduct of Happiness, both parties, oneself and the person one is giving to, are happy.

K2 Conduct of benefiting.

Sutra:

"Being well able to accommodate all living beings is called the Conduct of Benefiting.

Commentary:

"Being well able to accommodate all living beings" means to use precepts. It means getting beings to follow the precepts and in that way rescuing them. If everyone holds the precepts, the entire world is benefited. This **"is called the Conduct of Benefiting"** living beings. It is the second of these ten Bodhisattva practices.

K3 Conduct of non-opposition.

Sutra:

"Enlightening oneself and enlightening others without putting forth any resistance is called the Conduct of Non-Opposition.

Commentary:

"Enlightening oneself and enlightening others" is something we all should do. Thus, it is not enough to study the Buddhadharma and come to understand it oneself. We must also enable all beings to come to understand it, to the extent that we should help bring all beings to the accomplishment of Buddhahood. We must benefit ourselves and benefit others. Don't be selfish and concerned about your own gains. Nor should you be jealous or obstructive of others. If someone understands the Buddhadharma better than you do, under no circumstances should you be jealous. If you are jealous of others, you will undergo the retribution of being stupid in the future. Do your utmost with regard to the Dharma, but never, never become jealous of others. Don't have ideas of obstructing other people. It shouldn't be that if someone gets enlightened and you haven't, you have a fit, saying, "Really, the Buddhas are simply too unfair. How could they let him get enlightened instead of me?" With that, your ignorance arises. Or perhaps someone hears the Dharma and grasps it immediately. He learns fast and masters the Shurangama Mantra within a couple of month's time. But someone else who hasn't mastered it by then goes into a jealous rage. "How did you get ahead of me? How did you learn it so fast?" Whatever you do, no matter what, under no circumstances should you be jealous of others. You should be happy at heart. "His mastering the mantra is just like my mastering it." "His enlightenment is like my own." You should give rise to thoughts of accordance with other beings, praising them and congratulating them. The most undesirable thing to have when you study the Dharma is a jealous attitude.

I repeat, if you are jealous of others, you will be stupid in the future. So stupid will you be that you won't know how to do anything at all – even eat. What a mess you'll be in then.' It happens, you know. There are living beings who are so dumb they don't even know how to feed themselves, and they end up starving to death. If someone is more accomplished than you, you should be happy for them.

The Bodhisattvas reach the point of not **"putting forth any resistance."** This method of non-resistance refers to patience, the third Paramita. When something pleasant happens, one is happy; when something unpleasant happens, one is still happy. One doesn't put up any resistance; one doesn't oppose the opinions of others. That's patience. In all circumstances, one forebears. I've recited the poem by Maitreya Bodhisattva for you before:

The Old Fool wears tattered clothes
And fills his belly with bland food;
Mends his clothes against the cold,
And just puts up with whatever comes along.
If someone scolds the Old Fool,
He just says, "Fine."
If someone strikes the Old Fool,
He lays down to sleep.
"Spit on my face? I'll just let it dry.
I save the energy and you don't get upset."
This kind of Paramita
Is the jewel within the wonderful.
If you get this good news,
What worry can there be
about not perfecting the Way?

The third conduct is the practice of patience; it **"is called the Conduct of Non-Opposition."** No matter how you are treated, you don't get angry.

K4 Conduct of endlessness.

Sutra:

"To undergo birth in various forms continuously to the bounds of the future, equally throughout the three periods of time and pervading the ten directions, is called the Conduct of Endlessness.

Commentary:

"To undergo birth in various forms" means to be able to appear by transformation within any of the twelve classes of living beings. One can send transformation bodies among all those kinds of beings, appearing in forms like theirs, **"continuously to the bounds of the future, equally throughout the three periods of time" –** past, present, and future. One can "pervade **the ten directions**" without end and has what **"is called the Conduct of Endlessness,"** the fourth conduct. It corresponds to the perfection of vigor.

K5 Conduct of freedom from deluded confusion.

Sutra:

"When everything is equally in accord, one never makes mistakes among the various Dharma doors. This is called the Conduct of Freedom from Deluded Confusion.

Commentary:

This conduct corresponds with the perfection of dhyana samadhi, which aids those who are scattered and easily con-fused. **"When everything is equally in accord, one never makes mistakes among the various Dharma doors."** Within any Dharma door spoken by the Buddha one naturally gains under-standing and knows the function of any given Dharma. **"This is called the Conduct of Freedom from Deluded Confusion."**

K6 Conduct of wholesome manifestation.

Sutra:

"Then within what is identical, myriad differences appear; the characteristics of every difference are seen, one and all, in identity. This is called the Conduct of Wholesome Manifestation.

Commentary:

"Then within what is identical, myriad differences appear." What is identical is the principle. What are different are the specifics. At the noumenal level there is identity; at the phenomenal level there are differences. **"The characteristics of every difference are seen, one and all, in identity."** That is, the phenomena all tally with principle. There is:

1) the unobstructedness of principles in specifics;
2) the unobstructedness of specifics in principles;
3) the unobstructedness of specifics with specifics;
4) the unobstructedness of both principles and specifics.

Therefore, in identity appear differences; within differences identity is found. **"This is called the Conduct of Wholesome Manifestation."** Identity and differences do not obstruct one another, and each appears within the other. This is the perfection of wisdom.

K7 Conduct of non-attachment.

Sutra:

"This continues until it includes all the dust motes that fill up empty space throughout the ten directions. In each and every mote of dust there appear the worlds of the ten directions. And yet the appearance of dust motes and the appearance of worlds do not interfere with one another. This is called the Conduct of Non-Attachment.

Commentary:

"This continues until it includes all the dust motes that fill up empty space throughout the ten directions." Not only is it the case that within identity, differences can appear, and within differences, identity is evident, but within the few the many can appear, and within the many the few are evident. Within the small the great can appear; within the great the small are evident. "Empty space" is the manifestation of the great. "Dust motes" are the manifestation of the small. Within every dust mote, worlds appear, so that every world can fit within a mote of dust. But when a world appears in a dust mote, it's not the case that the world shrinks. Nor is it the case that the dust mote has to expand to contain the world. This is the great appearing in the small and the small manifesting the great without any hindrance.

"In each and every mote of dust there appear the worlds of the ten directions." The worlds of the ten directions are tremendously large, while a fine mote of dust is minute; yet none of the worlds get smaller, nor does the mote of dust expand. **"And yet the appearance of dust motes and the appearance of worlds do not interfere with one another."** They include one another without any obstruction. **"This is called the Conduct of Non-Attachment."** Worlds are motes of dust; motes of dust are worlds. Little is big, big is little. To experience this is the Conduct of Non-Attachment. This is the seventh perfection, that of expedience.

K8 Conduct of veneration.

Sutra:

"Everything that appears before one is the foremost paramita. This is called the Conduct of Veneration.

Commentary:

The Conduct of Veneration is also the perfection of vows. It is brought to accomplishment through the power of vows. **"Everything that appears before one is the foremost paramita."** All the states that manifest are the number one paramita, the

Dharma for reaching the other shore. **"This is called the Conduct of Veneration."** This is the eighth conduct.

K9 Conduct of wholesome dharma.

Sutra:

"With such perfect fusion, one can model one-self after all the Buddhas of the ten directions. This is called the Conduct of Wholesome Dharma.

Commentary:

"With such perfect fusion," when everything becomes the foremost paramita, **"one can model one-self after all the Buddhas of the ten directions."** In one's cultivation one can be in accord with all the rules and regulations established by all the Buddhas of the ten directions. **"This is called the Conduct of Wholesome Dharma."** It is the perfection of strength. One's own practice is strong. This is the ninth conduct.

K10 Conduct of true actuality.

Sutra:

"To then be pure and without outflows in each and every way is the primary truth, which is unconditioned, the essence of the nature. This is called the Conduct of True Actuality.

Commentary:

The tenth is called "the Conduct of True Actuality." **"To then be pure and without outflows in each and every way is the primary truth, which is unconditioned, the essence of the nature."** "In each and every way" means that all the previous nine entries into conduct are conducted purely and without outflows. Then there is only one truth, that of the unconditioned. And that's the way the nature originally is. **"This is called the Conduct of True Actuality."** This corresponds with the perfection of knowledge. These are the Ten Conducts of a Bodhisattva.

The Ten Transferences

J6 The ten positions of the ten transferences.
K1 Transference apart from appearances.

Sutra:

"Ananda, when these good men replete with spiritual penetrations, have done the Buddhas' work, are totally pure and absolutely true, and remain distant from obstacles and calamities, then they take living beings across while casting aside the appearance of taking them across. They transform the unconditioned mind and go toward the path of Nirvana. This is called the Transference of Saving and Protecting Living Beings, while apart from the Appearance of Living Beings.

Commentary:

"Ananda, when these good men, these people who have cultivated the Ten Conducts, develop genuine wisdom to the point that their practice is said to be true and real, then are **replete with spiritual penetrations, have done the Buddhas' work."** Throughout the ten directions they perform a tremendous number of deeds on behalf of the Buddhas. And yet:

The myriad practices they cultivate
are but flowers in space.
The Bodhimandas they sit in
are like the moon in water,

And subduing the demonic armies
mere reflections in a mirror.
They do great deeds of the Buddhas
while in the midst of a dream.

That represents their non-attachment. Everything is like an illusion, a transformation; nothing really exists. So don't be attached to anything. See through it all, put it down, and you can obtain self-mastery.

"They **are totally pure and absolutely true**; they have accomplished that state, **and** they **remain distant from obstacles and calamities.**" They are not hindered in any way. "**Then they take living beings across while casting aside the appearance of taking them across.**" They rescue those whom they should rescue without having any thought of having rescued them. The *Vajra Sutra* explains this as well; Shakyamuni Buddha says there:

> *"I should take all beings across to extinction, and yet when all beings are thus taken across, there should not be any beings taken across to extinction."*

Again, this means one must not be attached and think, "I did this, I did that." One builds a temple and then cannot get the thought out of one's mind that one was the builder and has accrued so much merit. That is to still have an appearance left.

"They take living beings across while casting aside the appearance of taking them across." You don't look upon the deed as something you did, but rather as something you should have done. It was your responsibility in the first place; why would you need to let anyone know it had been done? If you rag about what you've done, it implies that it was something you didn't have to do. Conversely, some people say, "I didn't steal anything or kill anyone in this life. I've never done anything bad, so why aren't things better for me?" This implies that they were originally destined to steal and kill, but that they refrained from doing so and should be rewarded for that. This is a mistaken point of view.

"They transform the unconditioned mind and go toward the path of Nirvana." They turn the unconditioned mind of the Small Vehicle toward Nirvana. **"This is called the Transference of Saving and Protecting Living Beings, while apart from the Appearance of Living Beings."** They see it as their responsibility to rescue living beings, and so they are apart from the appearance of having rescued them. They do not ponder the amount of merit and virtue involved in rescuing living beings. "It's my job. That's what I should be doing," should be how you think of it.

"But," you ask, "Isn't there merit and virtue involved in rescuing living beings?" Yes, there is. But don't dwell on it. What's past is past. What you've done, you've done. Don't hold on to the idea of having rescued living beings. This is not to say that you should not rescue beings; it's to say that you shouldn't harbor the appearance of having taken them across.

K2 Transference of indestructibility.

Sutra:

"To destroy what should be destroyed and to remain far removed from what should be left behind is called the Transference of Indestructibility.

Commentary:

"To destroy what should be destroyed" means to get rid of the things that one should not keep. What are they? No matter how much we talk it always comes back to the same things: karmic obstacles, ignorance, and afflictions. Get rid of these. Destroy them.

"To remain far removed from what should be left behind" means to get rid of your faults. For instance, people who cultivate the Way should not have any greed, anger, or stupidity. You should destroy them. All good dharmas should be embraced. All bad dharmas should be rejected. Get then far behind you. This **"is called the Transference of Indestructibility."** What is indestructible? Your inherent good roots are indestructible. Your originally

existent enlightened nature is indestructible. With the transference of indestructibility you have to destroy what should be destroyed and keep what is indestructible.

K3 Transference of sameness with all Buddhas.

Sutra:

"Fundamental enlightenment is profound indeed, an enlightenment equal to the Buddhas' enlightenment. This is called the Transference of Sameness with All Buddhas.

Commentary:

"Fundamental enlightenment" refers to the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One inherent in us all. It **"is profound indeed,"** and pure. It is **"an enlightenment equal to the Buddhas' enlightenment."** The enlightenment of our minds is the same as the enlightenment of the Buddhas. **"This is called the Transference of Sameness with All Buddhas."**

K4 Transference of reaching all places.

Sutra:

"When absolute truth is discovered, one's level is the same as the level of all Buddhas. This is called the Transference of Reaching All Places.

Commentary:

"**When** the **absolute truth** of the previous transference **is discovered, one's level is the same as the level of all Buddhas.**" This is a level which is a prelude to the Buddha's position. **"This is called the Transference of Reaching All Places."**

K5 Transference of the treasury of inexhaustible merit and virtue.

Sutra:

"Worlds and Thus Come Ones include one another without any obstruction. This is called the Transference of a Treasury of Inexhaustible Merit and Virtue.

Commentary:

"Worlds and Thus Come Ones include one another without any obstruction." Worlds are the very body of the Thus Come One; the very body of the Thus Come One is itself the worlds. The wonderful function of spiritual penetrations enables them to contain one another. Nor is there any hindrance for either, nor anything contrived about it. **"This is called the Transference of a Treasury of Inexhaustible Merit and Virtue."**

The Emperor Wu of Liang is a case in point of someone who was attached to the idea of creating merit. When he encountered the Patriarch Bodhidharma, he asked him, "I have built many grand temples. I have commissioned a tremendous number of people to enter the Sangha, I have made extensive vegetarian offerings. I've built bridges, improved highways, and much more. Tell me, how much merit have I accrued?"

Who would have guessed that the Patriarch would scowl and retort, "None whatsoever."

The Emperor was duly affronted and refused to have anything more to do with the Patriarch. Actually, Patriarch Bodhidharma was intent upon saving the Emperor. But because the Emperor's karmic obstructions were so heavy he missed his chance, even though he was face to face with the first Patriarch of China. It was like the saying, "Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva was right before him and he didn't even recognize him." The "Mind from the West" was right before the Emperor Wu of Liang and he failed to see him.

Why did he need rescuing by Patriarch Bodhidharma? It's because the Patriarch knew that the Emperor had a disaster in store for him. He was hoping to wake him up so he would either leave the home life and cultivate or at least yield the throne to someone else, thereby avoiding having to starve to death. Basically the Emperor was a devout believer in Buddhism, and during his reign Buddhism flourished because he used his imperial position to spread the Buddhadharma, building temples all about the land. The majority of the population was Buddhist during that reign period. But he had

created some heavy karma in past lives. In a former life the Emperor was a bhikshu who cultivated in the mountains. At one point he began to be visited every day by a monkey who stole the fruits and vegetables he had planted. Pretty soon there wasn't much left for him to eat. Because of that, he trapped the monkey in a cave and sealed the opening with a boulder. He had originally intended to leave it there for a few days to teach it a lesson and then let it go. The trouble was that he forgot about it, and the monkey starved to death in the cave.

In his life as an emperor, then, the monkey was reborn as a monkey-spirit who led an army and attacked Nan Ching. After conquering Nan Ching, the monkey-spirit locked the emperor in a tower, removed all food, and left him to starve. The bhikshu's retribution for having starved a monkey to death was that the monkey returned in a later life when the bhikshu was an emperor and starved him to death.

Patriarch Bodhidharma saw that the Emperor had amassed a lot of merit and virtue, and he thought that the Emperor might make use of the merit to lessen the offense. But in order for that to happen, the causes and conditions had to be right as well. That's why Patriarch Bodhidharma was so severe with him. But the emperor thought himself a mighty monarch to whom a penniless monk had no right to talk in such a way, so he shunned the Patriarch. Although Patriarch Bodhidharma wanted to save him, there was nothing he could do but leave, since the emperor would have nothing to do with him and did not seek to be saved. In the end, the Emperor starved to death at the hands of the monkey-spirit.

K6 Transference of the identity of all good roots.

Sutra:

"Since they are identical with the Buddha-ground, they create causes which are pure at each and every level. Brilliance emanates from them as they rely on these causes, and they go straight down the path to Nirvana. This is called the

Transference of Following in Accord with the Identity of All Good Roots.

Commentary:

After the Bodhisattvas have reached the accomplishment of the previous transference of a treasury of inexhaustible merit and virtue, then, **"since they are identical with the Buddha-ground, they create causes which are pure at each and every level."** At each level along the way they give rise to causes which are clear and pure and undefiled. "**Brilliance emanates from them as they rely on these causes, and they go straight down the path to Nirvana.** They hold to the Way which is neither produced nor destroyed. **This is called the Transference of Following in Accord with the Identity of All Good Roots.**"

K7 Transference of contemplating all living beings equally.

Sutra:

"When the true roots are set down, then all living beings in the ten directions are my own nature. Not a single being is lost, as this nature is successfully perfected. This is called the Transference or Contemplating All Living Beings Equally.

Commentary:

"When the true roots are set down, then all living beings in the ten directions are my own nature." They are one and the same as the Bodhisattvas. That is why Bodhisattvas want to rescue living beings without there being an appearance of living beings. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas see all living beings as their own substance. They are one with them. Therefore, for them to save living beings is not really to save other living beings; it's just to save themselves. **"Not a single being is lost, as this nature is successfully perfected."** Since they are one with all beings, no being is neglected. **"This is called the Transference or Contemplating All Living Beings Equally."**

To say that all beings are their own nature is to speak of living beings who exist outside themselves. But we can also speak of

internal beings, because there are boundlessly many beings within the body of each of us. Science describes the white corpuscles and the red corpuscles and verifies that our bodies contain innumerable microscopic organisms. If you were to open your Buddha Eye and look into people's bodies, you would see an unknown number of beings there, uncountably many tiny forms of life, even to the point that when you exhale, you send a lot of beings out in your breath. At that point they are incarnated again as beings. By the same token, you ingest innumerable beings when you inhale. So it's pretty hard to draw a clear line between being a carnivore and not being one, if you get down to the subtler aspects of it. Here you are taking life with every breath, and that, too, is a form of killing if you do it with a murderous intent. Of course, we're getting down to details here.

The beings in your body are just ordinary creatures if you don't cultivate. If you do cultivate, they become the Buddha-nature. They can all return to the source. You return to the origin and they go right along with you – all those tiny forms of life that you harbor. If you cultivate to the point where you have some skill, then the beings external to you and the beings within you all become one with you. But as of right now, there are basically too many living beings.

K8 Transference of the appearance of true suchness.

Sutra:

"All dharmas are themselves apart from all appearances, and yet there is no attachment either to their existence or to separation from them. This is called the Transference of the Appearance of True Suchness.

Commentary:

"All dharmas are themselves apart from all appearances." Right within dharmas one must be apart from all appearances. In the appearance of dharmas one must separate from the appearance of dharmas. **And yet there is no attachment either to their**

existence or to separation from them. This is called the Transference of the Appearance of True Suchness.

K9 Transference of liberation.

Sutra:

“That which is thus is truly obtained, and there is no obstruction throughout the ten directions. This is called the Transference of Unfettered Liberation.

Commentary:

One definition of True Suchness is “**that which is thus** being **truly obtained.**” It is also described as “wisdom which is thus giving rise to principle which is thus.” When that is obtained, **“there is no obstruction throughout the ten directions.”** You can roam throughout the Buddha realms of the ten directions without any hindrances. **“This is called the Transference of Unfettered Liberation.”** Nothing is tying you up. You are free.

K10 Transference of the limitlessness of the dharma realm.

Sutra:

“When the virtue of the nature is perfectly accomplished, the boundaries of the dharma realm are destroyed. This is called the Transference of the Limitlessness of the Dharma Realm.

Commentary:

Before the virtue of the nature is perfectly accomplished, before you have become one with the Dharma realm, you do not even know the boundaries of the Dharma realm. When the virtue of the nature has been perfectly accomplished and you become one with the Dharma realm, then you know the boundaries of the Dharma realm. But since it still has a boundary, you have not yet reached the ultimate accomplishment. Now, “**When the virtue of the nature is perfectly accomplished, the boundaries of the dharma realm are destroyed.** Even the Dharma realm is empty. **This is called the Transference of the Limitlessness of the Dharma Realm.**”

The Four Positions of Additional Practices

J7 Four positions of additional practices.
K1 Concludes the former discussion and begins the next.

Sutra:

"Ananda, when these good men have completely purified these forty-one minds, they further accomplish four kinds of wonderfully perfect additional practices.

Commentary:

The Bodhisattva, the person practicing, reaches a state of purity with regard to these forty-one minds. The "forty-one minds" are:

1) the level of dry wisdom;
2-11) the Ten Faiths;
12-21) the Ten Dwellings;
22-31) the Ten Conducts;
32-41) the Ten Transferences.

The level of dry wisdom, you'll remember, is also called "initial dry wisdom" and "the initial vajra mind." Following these forty-one positions are four further levels. They are known as the wonderfully perfect additional practices; they are:

1) heat;
2) summit;

3) patience;
4) first in the world.

K2 Specific explanation of the four positions.
L1 The level of heat.

Sutra:

"When the enlightenment of a Buddha is just about to become a function of his own mind, it is on the verge of emerging but has not yet emerged, and so it can be compared to the point just before wood ignites when it is drilled to produce fire. Therefore it is called the Level of Heat.

Commentary:

This is the first of the four additional practices, the level of heat. The analogy is given of wood which is drilled to get fire; this level is compared to the point just before the wood ignites. **"When the enlightenment of a Buddha is just about to become a function of his own mind"** means that what the Buddhas are enlightened to and what he himself is enlightened to are the same thing. When **"it is on the verge of emerging but has not yet emerged, and so it can be compared to the point just before wood ignites when it is drilled to produce fire."** The igniting of the wood being drilled is like enlightenment. The wood is right on the point of bursting into flame. With the enlightenment there is also heat, **"Therefore it is called the Level of Heat."** This is the forty-second position in the Bodhisattva's progression.

L2 Level of the summit.

Sutra:

"He continues on with his mind, treading where the Buddhas tread, as if relying and yet not. It is as if he were climbing a lofty mountain, to the point where his body is in space but there remains a slight obstruction beneath him. Therefore it is called the Level of the Summit.

Commentary:

"He continues on with his mind, treading where the Buddhas tread, as if relying and yet not." His own mind goes down the path the Buddhas take. He seems to be dependent and yet he is also independent. A different analogy is used here. **"It is as if he were climbing a lofty mountain, to the point where his body is in space but there remains a slight obstruction beneath him."** He is like someone climbing a mountain, and when he gets to the top it's as if he physically enters into empty space because he is so high up. But under his feet, as he stands on the mountain, there is still a slight hindrance. He still has not yet ascended into empty space. **"Therefore it is called the Level of the Summit."**

L3 Level of patience.

Sutra:

"When the mind and the Buddha are two and yet the same, he has well obtained the Middle Way. He is like someone who endures something when it seems impossible to either hold it in or let it out. Therefore it is called the Level of Patience.

Commentary:

"When the mind and the Buddha are two and yet the same, he has well obtained the Middle Way." The mind is the Buddha; the Buddha is the mind. Although they are said to be two, they come together as one. What is the mind is the Buddha. There is no Buddha outside the mind; there is no mind outside the Buddha. The mind and the Buddha are in a state of suchness. He has then genuinely obtained the principle and substance of the Middle Way. **"He is like someone who endures something when it seems impossible to either hold it in or let it out."** It is as if a situation arises which a person must bear: he'd like to keep it contained, but that is impossible; at the same time, it's impossible for him to let it out. So at that point he bears with it. He'd like to keep it in his mind and he'd like to release it. He can't decide which would be the better thing to do. So he bears with it. He'd like to let it go, but he

can't give it up And yet he'd still like to let it go. At this time he must be patient. **"Therefore it is called the Level of Patience."** It is the third of the additional practices.

L4 Level of being first in the world.

Sutra:

"When numbers are destroyed, there are no such designations as the Middle Way or as confusion and enlightenment; this is called the Level of Being First in the World.

Commentary:

"When numbers are destroyed": At the tenth transference, the boundaries of the Dharma Realm are destroyed. Now all numbers and boundaries are destroyed. What is meant? It's the same as a zero. I've talked about zero before. It is the absence of numbers. At that point **"there are no such designations as the Middle Way or as confusion and enlightenment."** Perfection is total and the light brilliant. There are no designations because it's a situation that's like zero. There's nothing that can be said about zero. Zero means the absence of everything. And yet everything outside the zero is contained within it. The zero is the mother of all things. But it is not designated as a mother, because there isn't anything there To understand what I'm saying right now is enlightenment.

There isn't any confusion; there isn't any enlightenment. Why isn't there any confusion? Because he is not confused. Why isn't there any enlightenment? He's already enlightened; what further enlightenment could there be? For there to be no confusion and no enlightenment is zero. All the mountains, the rivers, the great earth, the plants, and all the myriad appearances come forth from it.

There is no designation for enlightenment and confusion, or for the Middle Way. Even though there's no name for this state, we still have to call it something, so we force the issue and call it **"the Level of Being First in the World."** It's first in the world because there is no second. This is the last of the additional practices.

The Ten Positions of the Ten Grounds

J8 The ten positions of the ten grounds.
K1 Ground of happiness.

Sutra:

"Ananda, these good men have successfully penetrated through to Great Bodhi. Their enlightenment is entirely like the Thus Come One's. They have fathomed the state of Buddhahood. This is called the Ground of Happiness.

Commentary:

"Ananda, these good men have successfully penetrated through to Great Bodhi." The "good men" are the Bodhisattvas who have obtained the Level of Being First in the World.. Although the text says he has successfully penetrated through to great Bodhi, there really isn't anything that's been penetrated through to. **"Their enlightenment is entirely like the Thus Come One's."** Their enlightenment is the Thus Come One; the Thus Come One is enlightenment. They have become enlightened to that which the Thus Come One has become enlightened to. They can be called a Thus Come One when they have enlightened to that zero. And yet the zero isn't anything at all, so don't get attached to it!

"They have fathomed the state of Buddhahood." True Emptiness is the state of being nothing at all. But when they fathom the state of a Buddha, then within True Emptiness arises Wonderful

Existence. That Wonderful Existence is happiness. "Oh, so originally it's just that way!" That's the arising of happiness. "I didn't understand before, but now I do." They are inexpressibly happy. **"This is called the Ground of Happiness."** It's the first ground.

K2 Ground of leaving filth.

Sutra:

"The differences enter into identity; the identity is destroyed. This is called the Ground of Leaving Filth.

Commentary:

On the previous ground there was still happiness, and so an identity still existed, too. Although there were no designations, there was still an identity. That was when **"the differences enter into identity"** and become one. That is, although the phenomena and the noumenon are united, the noumenon still remains. Now when they reach the second ground, **"the identity is destroyed."** The second ground is called the Ground of Leaving Filth, which means that they separate from ignorance. Basically there isn't much ignorance left by this time, for their enlightened natures are already like that of a Buddha. A slight bit of attachment, a little defilement remains for them. Now "identity is destroyed"; their likeness to the Buddha ceases to be. That's to return to the source, to go back to the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, which is a great storehouse of light. It has no name or appearance. **"This is called the Ground of Leaving Filth."** Happiness is still a kind of defilement, If there is something you like, then you still have emotional reactions. At the second ground, all the defilements are left behind. Subtle ignorance is also lessened. But at this level the ignorance is still not completely cut off.

K3 Ground of emitting light.

Sutra:

"At the point of ultimate purity, brightness comes forth. This is called the Ground of Emitting Light.

Commentary:

A Bodhisattva on the first ground does not know the state of a Bodhisattva on the second ground. A Bodhisattva on the second ground doesn't know the state of a Bodhisattva on the third ground. **"At the point of ultimate purity, brightness comes forth."** The previous ground was that of leaving filth. But as long as there is a necessity to "leave" it, there must still be defilement. Only when one has completely left the filth is one clean. Let's take sweeping as an example. We sweep in order to clean up the floor. We put the broom aside when the floor is clean. As long as we are still sweeping, it isn't clean yet.

When he reaches the ultimate purity, light comes forth. There is brightness. So the third ground **"is called the Ground of Emitting Light."**

K4 Ground of blazing wisdom.

Sutra:

"When the brightness becomes ultimate, enlightenment is full. This is called the Ground of Blazing Wisdom.

Commentary:

"When the brightness becomes ultimate, enlightenment is full." The light reaches its maximum and the enlightened nature is perfected. **"This is called the Ground of Blazing Wisdom."** "Blazing" is descriptive of the wisdom that is bright like a torch.

K5 Ground of invincibility.

Sutra:

"No identity or difference can be attained. This is called the Ground of Invincibility.

Commentary:

"No identity or difference can be attained." Not only are things that are the same identical at this stage; all things are identical. The Bodhisattva cannot come to any distinction between sameness and difference. There is no way to represent them because basically there is no identity or difference. **"This is called the Ground of Invincibility."** There isn't anything that can overcome this level of understanding. It transcends all the other previous grounds. This is the name given to the fifth level of these stages of the Bodhisattvas' development.

Is it the case that one Bodhisattva reaches the Ground of Invincibility? Yes it is the case that one Bodhisattva does. And yet this one Bodhisattva is not just a single Bodhisattva. There is only one, and yet there is not. Here is where the Buddhadharma is to be found. One Bodhisattva comes up to this level. But millions of billions of other Bodhisattvas also come up to this level. For instance, when someone earns a Ph.D. degree, is that one person alone in earning it? Certainly that one person has earned it, but someone else can also earn one. Everyone who has one has earned it. And so how many earn one? Millions. Not just one. The same principle applies here. Probably more Bodhisattvas than there are sand grains in the Ganges River are certified as having attained each of these grounds.

K6 Ground of manifestation.

Sutra:

"With unconditioned True Suchness, the nature is spotless, and brightness is revealed. This is called the Ground of Manifestation.

Commentary:

"With unconditioned True Suchness, the nature is spotless, and brightness is revealed." It is unconditioned, and yet there is nothing which is not conditioned. True Suchness refers to the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. It is the One True

Dharma Realm. With unconditioned True Suchness everything is in a state of suchness, everything is true. There is nothing which is not true, nothing which is not in a state of suchness. The nature is extremely pure, and light shines forth. This is the sixth ground, **"called the Ground of Manifestation."** That's because the Bodhisattva's nature reveals itself.

K7 Ground of traveling far.

Sutra:

"Coming to the farthest limits of True Suchness is called the Ground of Traveling Far.

Commentary:

True Suchness has no limits and no farthest point, so how can this be? Again, it is descriptive. There really isn't any end to True Suchness, because it really doesn't have any limits, so that's why the Sutra says it this way: **"Coming to the farthest limits of True Suchness."** It's just like when we say that empty space is obliterated. But since empty space isn't even a substance to begin with, how can it be obliterated? This is the same kind of attempt to describe what is basically beyond comprehension.

True Suchness doesn't have any limits. It includes the Ten Dharma Realms with all their beings. How could it have a boundary? What's beyond the Ten Dharma Realms? Nothing. And so it says "Coming to the farthest limits of True Suchness." That is to travel far indeed! How far? Who knows? All we can say is that it's **"called the Ground of Traveling Far."** Ordinary people could never get there. Only a Bodhisattva at the seventh ground can go that far.

K8 Ground of immovability.

Sutra:

"The single mind of True Suchness is called the Ground of Immovability.

Commentary:

"**The single mind of True Suchness** is the One True Dharma Realm. It was said above that the mind is the Buddha and the Buddha is the mind. Now True Suchness is the mind and the mind is the Buddha. There is no distinction between True Suchness and the mind. Since True Suchness has no limits, the Bodhisattva's mind has no limits. When his mind has no limits, where does he go? He doesn't go anywhere. Therefore, it is **"called the Ground of Immovability."** Unmoving in the Bodhimanda, he pervades the Dharmarealm. This is the eighth ground.

K9 Ground of good wisdom.

Sutra:

"Bringing forth the function of True Suchness is called the Ground of Good Wisdom.

Commentary:

At the eighth ground, True Suchness and the mind become one, and this was called the ground of not moving. But to simply be unmoving and to never make a move would be useless. However, within True Suchness, the function now comes forth. What is the function of True Suchness? The function of True Suchness is gigantic. If it were small, it would have only a single function. But this gigantic function can be used however one wishes. According with conditions, one is unmoving; unmoving, one accords with conditions. One constantly accords with conditions and yet is constantly unmoving; one is constantly unmoving and yet constantly accords with conditions. Such a functioning must be connected with wisdom. Therefore, **"bringing forth the function of True Suchness is called the Ground of Good Wisdom."** This is the ninth ground. This wisdom is totally true and real.

Sutra:

"Ananda, all Bodhisattvas at this point and beyond have reached the effortless way in their cultivation. Their merit and

virtue are perfected, and so all the previous positions are also called the Level of Cultivation.

Commentary:

"**Ananda,** you should understand that **all Bodhisattvas at this point and beyond have reached the effortless way in their cultivation."** From the beginning – the level of dry wisdom, also known as the initial vajra mind – to the culmination of the ninth ground, there are a total of fifty-four positions. When the Bodhisattvas have passed through to this point, they've reached the effortless way. They have graduated. **"Their merit and virtue are perfected."** In their study leading toward Buddhahood, they are just about to earn this degree; they're about to become Buddhas. **"And so all the previous positions are also called the Level of Cultivation."**

K10 Ground of the dharma cloud.

Sutra:

"Then with a wonderful cloud of compassionate protection one covers the Sea of Nirvana. This is called the Ground of the Dharma Cloud.

Commentary:

"Wonder" and "compassion" are dharmas. "Protection" and "covering" belong to the analogy of the cloud and represent a sheltering influence. **"Then with a wonderful cloud of compassionate protection one covers the Sea of Nirvana."** One shelters all living beings. All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas emerge from the sea of Nirvana, and so the tenth ground **"is called the Ground of the Dharma Cloud."** At this level one shelters and protects all living beings.

The Position of Equal and Wonderful Enlightenment

J9 The position of equal enlightenment.
K1 Describing the position.

Sutra:

“The Thus Come Ones counter the flow as the Bodhisattvas thus reach this point through compliance with practice. Their enlightenments intermingle; it is therefore called Equal Enlightenment.

Commentary:

“The Thus Come Ones counter the flow.” This means that the Thus Come Ones have already become Buddhas. But they counter the flow and appear in the world to rescue living beings. Thus from the Buddha-position, they come back along the Bodhisattva path in order to greet the Bodhisattva. That’s what’s meant by countering the flow. **”The Bodhisattvas thus reach this point through compliance with practice.”** The Bodhisattvas comply with the flow. This “flow” refers to going from an ordinary person to Arhatship, through Bodhisattvahood, and on to Buddhahood – which the Bodhisattvas have not yet experienced at this point. So they are going along with the flow that leads to the Buddha’s enlightened position. Now, they actually encounter the Buddhas. **“Their enlightenments intermingle.”** The enlightenment of the

Buddhas and the enlightenment of the Bodhisattvas merge at this point. **"It is therefore called Equal Enlightenment."** These Bodhisattvas are equal to the Buddha. But theirs is still not wonderful enlightenment. It is still only similar to the Buddha's enlightenment, because at this level they still have left one bit of ignorance that seems to be that of production. They still must destroy that. So ignorance is difficult to leave behind. Once they smash it, however, they will be Buddhas.

When people claim to be Buddhas, I ask them, "From where did you come? What path did you take?" If they don't even know the name of the first position, have never seen the path that leads to the second position, and don't know how to get to the third position, then how can they have arrived at Buddhahood? They took a plane, perhaps? In that case a rocket would have been even faster. I suspect that such people will never reach the Buddha position. Why not? It is because they say they are there when in fact they are not. Do they speak the truth, or do they lie? They have not cultivated or done anything within the Buddhadharma, and yet they profess to be Buddhas. It just doesn't add up. How about those people who have practiced within the Buddhadharma for decades and still are not Buddhas? Maybe those people who say they are Buddhas have effected some scientific means to get themselves there so fast.

K2 Bringing out the wisdom obtained.

Sutra:

"Ananda, the enlightenment which encompasses the mind of dry wisdom through to the culmination of Equal Enlightenment is the initial attainment of the Vajra Mind. This constitutes the level of Initial Dry Wisdom.

Commentary:

"**Ananda, the enlightenment which encompasses the mind of dry wisdom,** also called the initial vajra mind and the level of dry wisdom, **through to the culmination of Equal Enlightenment is the initial attainment of the Vajra Mind.**" This refers to the latter

vajra mind. **“This constitutes the level of Initial Dry Wisdom”** of the latter vajra mind. The previous level of dry wisdom referred to the drying up of emotional love and desire. At that point, he had not yet joined with the Thus Come One’s Dharma water. Now, even though this latter level of dry wisdom is more encompassing, he still has not yet joined the sea of wonderful adornments of a Thus Come One, so it’s also referred to as dry wisdom. However, it pertains to the latter Vajra mind and is the final step.

J10 The position of wonderful enlightenment.

Sutra:

“Thus there are totals of twelve single and grouped levels. At last they reach Wonderful Enlightenment and accomplish the Unsurpassed Way.

Commentary:

“Thus there are totals of twelve single and grouped levels.” There are seven single levels:

1) initial dry wisdom;
2) heat;
3) summit;
4) patience;
5) first in the world;
6) equal enlightenment;
7) wonderful enlightenment.

There are five grouped levels:

1) the Ten Faiths;
2) the Ten Dwellings;
3) the Ten Conducts;
4) the Ten Transferences;
5) the Ten Grounds.

Because each of these levels includes ten positions, they are classed as groups. Together the seven single levels and the five groups make twelve. There are fifty-four positions from the Initial Dry Wisdom to Equal Enlightenment. Some count the Initial Dry Wisdom of the latter vajra mind as the fifty-fifth, but actually that level of dry wisdom is the same as Equal Enlightenment.

"At last they reach Wonderful Enlightenment and accomplish the Unsurpassed Way." They come to the end of the path to Wonderful Enlightenment and accomplish the reward and the substance of Wonderful Enlightenment. They have accomplished Buddhahood.

I2 Conclusion: manifestation of pure dharmas.

Sutra:

"At all these levels they use vajra contemplation of the ten profound analogies for the ways in which things are like an illusion. In Shamatha they use the Thus Come Ones' Vipashyana to cultivate them purely, to be certified to them, and to gradually enter them more and more deeply.

Commentary:

"At all these levels they use vajra contemplation of the ten profound analogies for the ways in which things are like an illusion." These levels are the ones just described, from the level of dry wisdom of the initial vajra mind through the Ten Faiths, the Ten Dwellings, the Ten Conducts, the Ten Transferences, the Ten Grounds, and the Four Additional Practices. They use the vajra mind to cultivate with, to contemplate by. They contemplate how things are like an illusion. "Illusion" means that you say it is real, but it isn't; you say it's false, but it isn't. It's as I mentioned before:

The myriad practices he cultivates
are but flowers in space.
The Bodhimanda he sits in
is like the noon in water.
And subduing the demonic armies,

mere reflections in a mirror.
He does great deeds of the Buddhas
while in a dream.

The "Ten Profound Analogies" are as follows:

1. All karma is like an illusion.

You should look upon karmic obstacles as illusory, not real.

2. All dharmas are like a mirage.

Sometimes in the spring you'll see what seems to be smoke rising, but when you approach the spot, you find there's really nothing there at all. It's just a mirage. You should look upon all dharmas in the same way.

3. All physical bodies are like the moon in water.
4. All wonderful forms are like flowers in space.
5. All wonderful sounds are like echoes in a valley.
6. All Buddhalands are like gandharva cities.

Basically the Buddhalands ate real, but you should look upon them as if they were but the cities of gandharvas.

7. All deeds of the Buddha are like dreams.
8. The Buddha's body is like a reflection.
9. The reward body is like an image.
10. The Dharma body is like a transformation.

You should not look upon any of these things as real. You should neither grasp nor reject these illusory states. That is because everything is empty; you should not regard anything as actually existent. What is the meaning behind these Ten Profound Analogies? They tell you not to be attached to anything at all. You have to put everything down. If you see through it and put to all down, then you will obtain self-mastery.

"In Shamatha they use the Thus Come Ones' Vipashyana to cultivate them purely, to be certified to them, and to gradually

enter them more and more deeply.” “Shamatha” means stopping and “vipashyana” means contemplating. We are to cultivate the Dharma door of stopping and contemplating. “Vipashyana” also means “subtle, secret contemplation and illumination.” Gradually, bit by bit, one progresses and enters into this purification and certification.

I3 He stresses the importance of vigor in the initial resolve.

Sutra:

“Ananda, because they put to use the three means of advancement throughout all of them, they are well able to accomplish the fifty-five stages of the True Bodhi Path.

Commentary:

The “three means of advancement” have already been explained. They are:

1) Getting rid of aiding causes;
2) Cleaning up the proper nature;
3) Guarding against the manifestation of karma.

The “fifty-five stages” are:

1) the Ten Faiths;
2) the Ten Dwellings;
3) the Ten Conducts;
4) the Ten Transferences;
5) the Four Additional Practices;
6) the Ten Grounds;
7) Equal Enlightenment.

I4 He decides the division of proper and deviant.

Sutra:

“This manner of contemplation is called ‘proper contemplation.’ Contemplation other than this is called ‘deviant contemplation.’”

Commentary:

"This manner of contemplation is called 'proper contemplation.'" If you can look upon the triple world as upon flowers in space; if you can regard all deeds of the Buddha as if done in a dream; and if you rely on the three means of advancement in your cultivation, your contemplation is proper. If you can use the vajra mind in your contemplation to make a subtle, secret contemplation and illumination as you pass through the fifty-five stages, then you are practicing proper contemplation. This is proper cultivation of the dharma of neither production nor extinction. **"Contemplation other than this is called 'deviant contemplation.'"** If you don't cultivate this Dharma-door; if you do not contemplate in this way; if you cultivate dharmas subject to production and extinction, your contemplation is deviant.

CHAPTER 3

The Names of the Sutra

E2 He explains the name of the entire Sutra.
F1 Manjushri asks the Sutra's name.

Sutra:

Then Dharma Prince Manjushri arose from his seat, and in the midst of the assembly he bowed at the Buddha's feet and said to the Buddha, "What is the name of this sutra and how should we and all living beings uphold it?"

Commentary:

At this point in the discussion, **Dharma Prince Manjushri arose from his seat, and in the midst of the assembly he bowed at the Buddha's feet and said to the Buddha –** Bodhisattva Manjushri now has a question to ask: "**What is the name of this sutra and how should we and all living beings uphold it?** World Honored One, what name do you give to this Sutra? How should we in this assembly and living beings of the future uphold it? How should we cultivate it? How should we offer up our conduct with regard to this Sutra?"

F2 The Thus Come One answers with five names.
G1 Wisdom of the realm.

Sutra:

The Buddha told Manjushri, “This Sutra is called ‘The Summit, Syi Dan Dwo Bwo Da La, and Unsurpassed Precious Seal of the Seal of the Great Buddha, and the Pure, Clear, Ocean-Like Eye of the Thus Comes Ones of the Ten Directions.’

Commentary:

The Buddha told Manjushri, “This Sutra is called ‘The Summit, Syi Dan Dwo Bwo Da La, and Unsurpassed Precious Seal of the Seal of the Great Buddha.’” This refers to the invisible summit, the crown of the Buddha’s head, which poured forth splendorous light. **Syi Dan Dwo Bwo Da La** is the Great White Canopy. There is nothing more revered or honored than the **“Unsurpassed Precious Seal.”** The “precious seal” is that of the Dharma King, the Buddha. This first name indicates how supreme the Shurangama Mantra is. If people recite the Shurangama Mantra, they are worthy of receiving the precious seal of the Dharma King. This Sutra is also the **“Pure, Clear, Ocean-Like Eye of the Thus Comes Ones of the Ten Directions.”** This refers to pure wisdom. The “eye” represents wisdom.

G2 Benefit to the opportune.

Sutra:

“It is also called ‘The Cause for Saving a Relative’: to rescue Ananda and the Bhikshuni Nature, who is now in this assembly, so that they obtain the Bodhi mind and enter the sea of pervasive knowledge.

Commentary:

It is also called ‘The Cause for Saving a Relative’: to rescue Ananda.” The Buddha was related to Ananda; they were cousins. He wanted to save Ananda from the difficulty he got into with Matangi’s daughter. He also rescued **“the Bhikshuni Nature, who**

is now in this assembly." The Bhikshuni Nature was Matangi's daughter. She was, by now, a fourth-stage Arhat in the assembly. **"They obtain the Bodhi mind and enter the sea of pervasive knowledge."** These two people have attained levels of enlightenment. "Pervasive knowledge" is as in "One of Proper and Pervasive Knowledge," one of the titles of the Buddhas. "Proper knowledge" is knowing that the mind gives rise to the myriad dharmas. "Pervasive knowledge" is knowing that the myriad dharmas are only from the mind.

G3 Cultivation of the nature.

Sutra:

"It is also called 'The Tathagata's Secret Cause of Cultivation, His Certification to the Complete Meaning.'

Commentary:

"It is also called 'The Tathagata's Secret Cause.'" It has another name, which indicates that it is the most secret Dharma door of the Thus Come One. It is the cause of his **"Cultivation, His Certification to the Complete Meaning."** Through cultivation of it, one certifies to the fruition and fathoms the most fundamental principle. This is another name for this Sutra.

G4 Wonderfully important.

Sutra:

"It is also called 'The Great Pervasive Method, the Wonderful Lotus Flower King, the Dharani Mantra which is the Mother Of All Buddhas Of the Ten Directions.'

Commentary:

"It is also called 'The Great Pervasive Method.'" This is a Dharma. It is the greatest Dharma; it pervades the ten directions and is boundlessly vast. **"The Wonderful Lotus Flower King"** is an analogy for the *Shurangama Sutra*. **"The Dharani Mantra which is the Mother Of All Buddhas Of the Ten Directions"** refers to the Shurangama Mantra. All the Buddhas of the ten

directions are born from the Shurangama Mantra. “Dharani” is a Sanskrit word which means to “encompass and hold.” It encompasses all dharmas; it holds limitless meanings. Another meaning is that it encompasses the three karmas of body, mouth, and mind so that no violations are made by them. With your body you do not kill, steal, or lust. With your mind you are not greedy, angry, or stupid. With your mouth you do not indulge in loose speech, harsh speech, lying, or gossip. You do not commit any of these ten evil deeds. And it holds the limitless Dharma doors of all the Buddhas. That’s another way to explain “dharani.”

G5 Cause and effect.

Sutra:

“It is also called ‘The Foremost Shurangama, Sections and Phrases for Anointing the Crown of the Head, and All Bodhisattvas’ Myriad Practices.’

Commentary:

“The Foremost Shurangama”: This is the first and foremost of durable dharmas. It is a strong and firm dharma. **“Sections and Phrases for Anointing the Crown of the Head”** refers to the Shurangama Mantra. If you recite it, your karmic obstacles will very quickly be eradicated. Very soon you will obtain wisdom. Earlier, in his verse, Ananda said of it:

The wonderfully deep dharani,
the unmoving honored one,
The foremost Shurangama King
is seldom found in the world.
It melts away my upside-down thoughts
gathered in a million kalpas.
So I needn’t endure asamkhyeya aeons
to obtain the Dharma Body.

The Shurangama Mantra can invisibly anoint you on the crown of the head and thereby eradicate your upside-down thoughts that

have gone on for limitless aeons. There is no need to have to pass through three great asamkhyeya aeons before you obtain the Dharma body.

“And All Bodhisattvas’ Myriad Practices” are contained within this Sutra.

G6 General answer.

Sutra:

“Thus should you respectfully uphold it.”

Commentary:

“Ananda, you should rely on this Dharma in your cultivation. **Thus should you respectfully uphold it.**”

D3 Those whose conditions are opportune obtain benefit.
E1 A description of those who hear.

Sutra:

After this was said, Ananda and all in the great assembly immediately received the Thus Come One’s instruction in the secret seal, the meaning of Bwo Da La, and heard these names for the complete meaning of this Sutra.

Commentary:

After this was said, after the Buddha finished explaining the names of this Sutra, **Ananda and all in the great assembly immediately received the Thus Come One’s instruction in the secret seal.** Everyone simultaneously took in the Thus Come One’s teaching about the secret seal, **the meaning of Bwo Da La**. “Bwo Da La,” again, is the Great White Canopy. They fathomed its wonderful meaning. **And** they **heard these names for the complete meaning of this Sutra.** These names were the most comprehensive, the most ultimate, the most thoroughly meaningful titles.

E2 Their sudden enlightenment to dhyana.

Sutra:

They were suddenly enlightened to dhyana, advanced in their cultivation to the sagely position, and increased their understanding of the wonderful principle. Their minds were focused and serene.

Commentary:

They were suddenly enlightened to dhyana. "Dhyana" is a Sanskrit word which means "cultivation of thought ." "Suddenly enlightened" means that their awakening was immediate and swift. They **advanced in their cultivation to the sagely position.** The "sagely position" refers to the ultimate one – Buddhahood. They **increased their understanding of the wonderful principle."** This means that their wisdom increased. Each person's wisdom became further developed. **Their minds were focused and serene.** There was nothing cluttering their minds. They were clear and open. They were about to reach the fundamental substance of the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

E3 Gradual certification to the second fruition.

Sutra:

Ananda cut off and cast aside six sections of subtle afflictions in his cultivation of the mind in the Triple Realm.

Commentary:

At this point, Ananda is certified to the second fruition of Arhatship. **Ananda cut off and cast aside six sections of subtle afflictions in his cultivation of the mind in the Triple Realm.** He has already cut off the view-delusions, and now he severs the first six sections of the desire realm's thought-delusions. There are eighty-one thought-delusions in all, nine divisions with nine sections each. These afflictions are called "subtle" because it is not at all easy to detect them. It's hard to perceive them within one's

self-nature, but now Ananda has been able to cut away some of this affliction.

CHAPTER 4

The Seven Destinites

C2 Aiding the path: specific explanation of the important dharma of protecting the samadhi.
Dl Discusses the seven destinies and urges separation from them in order to caution those of the future.
El Ananda requests.
Fl Expresses gratitude for prior teaching and traces benefit gained.

Sutra:

He arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, placed his palms together respectfully, and said to the Buddha. "The Great, Awesome and Virtuous World Honored One, whose compassionate sound knows no limit, has well instructed living beings as to their extremely subtle submersion in delusion and has caused me on this day to become blissful in body and mind and to obtain enormous benefit.

Commentary:

Then, Ananda **arose from his seat**. Because he had cut through some of his subtle afflictions upon hearing what the Buddha had to say, he got up at this point, **bowed at the Buddha's feet, placed his palms together respectfully, and said to the Buddha. "The Great, Awesome and Virtuous World Honored One, whose compassionate sound knows no limit, has well instructed living**

beings.” “Great awesomeness” subdues living beings. Many living beings are stubborn and obstinate. They don’t believe anything you tell them. They don’t believe in cause and effect, they don’t believe in the cycle of rebirth, they don’t believe in retributions. So the Buddha, devising good and clever expedients, uses awesome virtue. With his awesomeness, which can be overwhelming, he subdues living beings. Virtue, on the other hand, gathers in living beings. So this phrase represents the two aspects of subduing and gathering in. He gathers in living beings who have faith and are receptive. His virtue is like a magnet that attracts iron filings, which represent the living beings he gathers in. The Buddha’s compassionate voice has no limits. It is unhindered, reaching everywhere to rescue all. He **“has well instructed living beings as to their extremely subtle submersion in delusion.”** Originally living beings didn’t even realize they were hindered by subtle delusions, so the Buddha pointed it out to them. “**And** he **has caused me,** Ananda, **on this day to become blissful in body and mind.**” I am experiencing physical and mental joy. I am unspeakably happy. “**And** he has caused me **to obtain enormous benefit.**” I’ve never known such tremendous benefit.

F2 He asks about the destinies.

Sutra:

“World Honored One, if the wonderful brightness, of this truly pure and wonderful mind is basically all-pervading, then everything on the great earth, including the grasses and trees, the wriggling worms and tiny forms of life are originally True Suchness and are themselves the Thus Come One-the Buddha’s true body.

Commentary:

“**World Honored One, if the wonderful brightness, of this truly pure and wonderful mind is basically all-pervading**-if, in fact, it pervades the Dharma realm, then it is perfect without any excess or deficiency. **Then everything on the great earth, including the grasses and trees, the wriggling worms and tiny**

forms of life are part of that." "Grasses and trees" are considered insentient beings. "Wriggling worms and tiny forms of life" are the smallest of the sentient realm. They don't have much awareness. They can move, but not far, and their perception is quite limited. Nonetheless, they **"are originally True Suchness and are themselves the Thus Come One-the Buddha's true body."** They are all replete with the true substance of a Buddha – the capacity to become a Buddha.

Sutra:

"Since the Buddha's body is true and real, how can there also be hells, hungry ghosts, animals, asuras, humans, gods, and other paths of rebirth? World Honored One, do these paths exist naturally of themselves, or are they created by living beings' falseness and habits?

Commentary:

"**Since the Buddha's body is true and real, how can there also be hells, hungry ghosts, animals, asuras, humans, gods, and other paths of rebirth?** How do you explain the existence of these paths? **World Honored One, do these paths exist naturally of themselves, or are they created by living beings' falseness and habits?** have the six paths of rebirth always been in existence or do living beings create them? I don't understand the principle here.

F3 Specifically asks about the hells.

Sutra:

"World Honored One, the bhikshuni Precious Lotus Fragrance, for example, received the Bodhisattva Precepts and then indulged in lustful desire, saying that sexual acts did not involve killing or stealing and that they carried no karmic retribution. But after saying this, her female organs caught fire, and then the raging blaze spread throughout all her joints as she fell into the Unintermittent Hell alive.

Commentary:

"Why do I say I don't understand the principle behind the six paths?" Ananda continues. **"World Honored One, the Bhikshuni Precious Lotus Fragrance, for example, received the Bodhisattva Precepts and then indulged in lustful desire, saying that sexual acts did not involve killing or stealing."** This bhikshuni received the Bodhisattva Precepts, but she did not uphold them. She had sex on the sly. Having done this, what do you suppose she said? She had a pretty speech ready. She lied. She said that sex didn't involve killing or stealing. "It's not murder. It's not theft. You're not stealing anyone's things. It's just an enjoyment between men and women, a bliss that they share. What crime is there in that? Although the Buddha told us to refrain from it, I don't think that restraint is necessary in this case. It doesn't matter. It's no big sin. What could be wrong with men and women experiencing such a blissful encounter?" That was her general line of reasoning. She was really emphatic about it, too. She said of such sexual experiences **"that they carried no karmic retribution."** "As to sex," she said, "have it as much as you want. The more the better. It doesn't matter." Thus it was that she actually advocated sexual desire. She was a bhikshuni and yet she was promoting sex.

"But after saying this, her female organs caught fire, and then the raging blaze spread throughout all her joints." It doesn't matter, huh? In her female organs a fire sprang up. Terrible, wouldn't you say? I believe by then she was being burned so fiercely that she screamed and cried. She was no longer rationalizing that her conduct incurred no offense. Once her female organs were ablaze, the fire spread to all her limbs and joints. That's because during the sexual act men and women feel a sense of pleasure and contentment throughout their entire body. They take this as pleasure, not realizing that such abandonment is just the next thing to death. What's really happening is that they are going to die a little sooner, just die a little sooner. Plunging into such situations, they totally abandon themselves, to the point that they just want to die – both men and women. To die a little sooner is just fine, they

feel. But actually they are drilling their way into the hells; they are burrowing into the hells. The bhikshuni’s joints caught fire because sexual desire belongs to the element fire. At its peak there is a kind of fire involved. So we speak of the “fire of desire.” The blaze was raging so that fire extinguishers and even the entire three-alarm crew would have been useless. Why is that? It’s because the fire came from her own heavy sexual desire. No amount of water could quench it.

What happened to her then? There wasn’t any other road to take at that point. **“She fell into the Unintermittent Hell alive.”** In the Unintermittent Hell, there are no lapses in time at all. There are no breaks. Also, its space is uninterrupted in that one person fills it, and many people fill it. It’s not roomy there, whether you’re alone or in a crowd. Further, one knows not how many great aeons pass by while one continuously experiences bitter suffering there. There are no interruptions in time or in space. The extreme suffering is unintermittent. Birth and death are uninterrupted.

When this bhikshuni got to that hell, what do you suppose she found? There were iron-beaked birds and iron-mouthed worms that burrowed in and out of her limbs and joints. The place that received special attention was, of course, her female organs. These creatures would drill their way in and then drill their way back out. Each time they did this, their attack would kill her. But then a clever wind would blow – that wind is a special feature of the hells – and revive her. So in a single day and night she would experience tens of thousands of births and deaths. She would die and be revived, die and be revived, again and again, uncountably many times.

In addition, the hells are specially equipped for people who are fond of sexual desire. One of the implements is a copper pillar. It is red-hot because a fire blazes within it. However, when one who is fond of sexual desire looks at that hot pillar, one does not see it as such. When a man looks at the pillar, he sees a woman. When a woman looks at the pillar, it is a man. In fact, they see that pillar as their former boyfriend or girlfriend. So the race towards it and,

unaware it is a copper pillar, they madly embrace it. The red-hot copper pillar then fries them to a crisp. As if that weren't enough, out of the corner of their eye they see a bed. Actually, it's an iron bed which is also red hot. But what the person sees is a former boyfriend or girlfriend on the bed. They run to the bed and get burned again. Why? Because their sexual karma is so heavy that every way they turn they must undergo this retribution. This is the kind of retribution the bhikshuni Precious Lotus Fragrance had to undergo. She experienced the hells while still alive. Could she have continued to state that the sexual act did not involve killing or stealing and that it incurred no retribution? Once she began experiencing the retribution, it was too late. She wasn't sorry soon enough. This happened at the time when the Buddha was in the world. There was a bhikshuni who was this lax. It's not just nowadays that bhikshunis are sometimes lax; it happened even during the Buddha's time.

Sutra:

"And there were the Mighty King Crystal and the Bhikshu Good Stars. Crystal exterminated the Gautama clan and Good Stars lied and said that all dharmas are empty. They both sank into the Unintermittent Hell alive.

Commentary:

"And there were the Mighty King Crystal and the Bhikshu Good Stars. Crystal exterminated the Gautama clan." King Crystal and the Buddha were supposedly relatives, though in fact they were not. King Crystal's father, also a king, wanted to marry into the Gautama clan. Since the Gautama clan was a more honorable one than the King's, the Gautama people did not like the idea. No one wanted to give a daughter to the King in marriage, but they didn't dare refuse outright, because the King was powerful. A refusal might have resulted in big trouble. Finally they decided among themselves to send one of their servant girls, a particularly beautiful one, and pretend she was of the Gautama clan. King Crystal was an offspring of that marriage.

Once, while that king was still a child, someone built a temple for the Buddha, complete with an elaborate Dharma Seat. When the seat was finished, but before the Buddha himself had ascended the platform to sit on it and speak Dharma, the child who was to be King Crystal climbed up and sat on it. The Buddha's disciples and the donors who saw him all scolded him, saying, "You're the son of a slave, how dare you sit in the Buddha's seat?" Hearing them call him that, he was outraged, and he said to his attendant, "Wait until I'm the King and then remind me of what was said here today, lest I forget it. People from the Gautama clan say I'm the son of a slave. Remind me of that. I intend to get even."

Later, when he was King, his attendant did remind him, and the King issued an edict that the entire Gautama clan was to be exterminated, including the Buddha himself. When Mahamaudgalyayana got wind of this, he went to the Buddha to report. "We have to think of a way to save them," he said. But the Buddha didn't say anything. So Maudgalyayana loosed his spiritual powers, put five hundred members of the Gautama clan into his precious bowl, and sent them to the heavens. He thought they'd be safe there. When the King had completed the extermination, Maudgalyayana told Shakyamuni Buddha, "I've got five hundred Gautamans in my bowl stashed away in the heavens, so the clan isn't totally gone after all. I'll bring them down now and let them go." But when he'd recalled them and took a look in his bowl, he found nothing there but blood. "Why was I unable to save them?" asked the puzzled Maudgalyayana. He wanted the Buddha to explain the causes and conditions.

"Ah, you don't know," said the Buddha. "On the causal ground, a long time ago, at a place where the weather was hot, there was a pool with schools of fish in it. The two leaders of the schools were named "Bran" and "Many Tongues." The water in the pool evaporated in the intense heat, and since the people in the area didn't have anything else to eat, they ate the fish. In the end there was just a mud-hole, but even then they noticed a movement in the mud. Digging in, they found the two big fish-kings – Bran and

Many Tongues. At that time, I, Shakyamuni Buddha, was a child among these people – who were later to become the Gautama clan. Seeing that the two fish were about to be devoured alive, I beat them over the head three times with a club to knock them out first." That's why in his life as a Buddha, he had to endure a three-day headache as retribution. "Further, the fish, Bran, was the present King Crystal, and the fish, Many Tongues, was his attendant who reminded him of the words spoken by the Gautama clan to the King as a child. So it was fated that he would exterminate the Gautama clan." Even though Shakyamuni had become a Buddha, he could not rescue his people from the fixed karma they were destined to repay.

The Bhikshu Good Stars was forever voicing his deviant knowledge and deviant views. When he spoke Dharma, he did not speak in accord with what the Buddha taught. He made up his own. For instance, the Buddha instructed us to refrain from killing, but this bhikshu's instruction was, "It's not necessary. Why should we refrain from killing? Birth and death goes on and on for living beings, and some of them are especially intended for people to eat. If you don't eat them, what use will they be left alive? They don't have any sense." In this way he countered the Buddha's admonishment not to take life. This bhikshu had originally left home under the Buddha, but later he disagreed with the Dharma the Buddha spoke. Whatever the Buddha said he found questionable, and he was able to influence a lot of the less intelligent bhikshus to go along with him. They began believing him. "Right!" they said. "What he says makes sense. What's the crime in killing?" It was much the same situation as with the bhikshuni Precious Lotus Fragrance. "We just take what we need; it's not that we steal. If we have something, then we don't need to take it. But if you don't take what you need, how can you get by in this life?" That's what he said about stealing. He thought of ways to counter the five most basic precepts established by the Buddha. **"Good Stars lied and said that all dharmas are empty."** His best line was, "Everything is empty. Killing is empty, and stealing is empty, since there isn't

anything at all to begin with: There's no substance to karma. You talk about creating karma? Then bring out your 'karma' and show it to me. It doesn't exist!"

"They both sank into the Unintermittent Hell alive." They didn't even wait until they died to fall into the hells. King Crystal, Bhikshu Good Stars, and Bhikshuni Precious Lotus Fragrance experienced hell in their physical bodies while still alive. So Ananda asks the Buddha about these causes and conditions.

Sutra:

"Are these hells fixed places, or do they arise spontaneously? Is it that each individual undergoes whatever kind of karma he or she creates? I only hope the Buddha will be compassionate and instruct those of us who do not understand this. May he cause all beings who uphold the precepts to positively and respectfully receive this determination upon hearing it and be careful and clear, free from any violations."

Commentary:

"Are these hells fixed places, or do they arise spontaneously?" Since Bhikshuni Precious Lotus Fragrance, Bhikshu Good Stars, and King Crystal all fell into the hells alive, Ananda brings them up as examples and then asks if the hells are in a fixed and certain place. **"Is it that each individual undergoes whatever kind of karma he or she creates?"** Each of these three people had to undergo retribution in accord with the kind of karma they created. What is the principle involved here? Are the hells prepared in advance for them, or do they make their own? Where do hells come from? How do they relate to the creation of karma and the undergoing of retribution? Are the hells public facilities like prisons, or are they private cells? **I only hope the Buddha will be compassionate and instruct those of us who do not understand this.** "I'm totally uninformed on this matter," says Ananda. "I'm as innocent as a child when it comes to this. **May he cause all beings who uphold the precepts to positively and respectfully receive this determination upon hearing it.** I hope they will all listen and

obey the decisive instructions offered by the Buddha. I hope they will **be careful and clear, free from any violations.** May they cultivate with the utmost purity and be very cautious and clean, so that in no way do they transgress the pure precepts. Please, Buddha, explain this for us."

E2 The Thus Come One answers in detail.
Fl Praises him and promises to speak.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, "What a good question! You want to keep all living beings from entering into deviant views. You should listen attentively now and I will explain this matter for you.

Commentary:

When the Buddha heard Ananda ask how to help living beings of the future guard the precepts carefully, he was extremely happy. **The Buddha said to Ananda, "What a good question!** This is a most appropriate question. It's exactly the doctrine you should be asking about. **You want to keep all living beings from entering into deviant views.** This can keep them from falling into deviant knowledge and views and help them to obtain proper knowledge and views instead. **You should listen attentively now and I will explain this matter for you.**"

F2 Clarifies the destinies.
G1 A general explanation of the basic principle of rising and falling according to emotion and reason.
H1 He enumerates the accumulated habits that divide emotion and thought.

Sutra:

"Actually, Ananda, all living beings are fundamentally true and pure, but because of their false views they give rise to the falseness of habits, which are divided into an internal aspect and an external aspect.

Commentary:

“**Actually, Ananda, all living beings are fundamentally true and pure,** but based on the truth they give rise to falseness: they produce ignorance. From ignorance they give rise to false views. **Because of their false views they give rise to the falseness of habits.** These false habits pertain to their internal physical being and to their external environment. They **are divided into an internal aspect and an external aspect.** There are false habits that occur outside the physical body and false habits that occur within it also.

H2 He specifically describes the rising or sinking at death.
I1 The internal aspect belongs to emotion and so causes one to fall.

Sutra:

“Ananda, the internal aspect refers to what occurs inside living beings. Because of love and defilement, they produce the falseness of emotions. When these emotions accumulate without cease, they can create the fluids of love.

Commentary:

“Ananda, the internal aspect refers to what occurs inside living beings.” This means within the physical body. What is within the physical body? **“Because of love and defilement, they produce the falseness of emotions.”** There is love and desire and defiled dharmas. From the love and defilement, false emotions come up. **“These emotions accumulate without cease.”** The emotions pile up day by day, month after month. They become abundant and do not stop. The emotions of love are ever-present. **“They can create the fluids of love.”**

Sutra:

“That is why living beings’ mouths water when they think about delicious food. When they think about a deceased person, either with fondness or with anger, tears will flow from their eyes. When they are greedy for wealth and jewels, a current of lust will course through their hearts. When confronted with a

smooth and supple body, their minds become attached to lustful conduct and from both male and female organs will come spontaneous secretions.

Commentary:

"That is why living beings' mouths water when they think about delicious food." Why is it said that once living beings have love and defilement they develop emotions which eventually, if not stopped, will produce fluids of love? Some examples will substantiate this. Just thinking about eating some delicacy makes people salivate. It happens because of their gluttonous thought. "**When they think about a deceased person –** a friend or close relative, someone with whom they had the most affinities **– either with fondness or with anger, tears will flow from their eyes."** The person who has died was so close to them that they give rise to anger – resentment or even rage – and think, "He was so fine. Why did he have to die so soon? Things were so good between us. Why him?" Excessively fond regard or tremendous resentment both cause a person to cry. **"When they are greedy for wealth and jewels, a current of lust will course through their hearts."** They dream about getting rich, and in their hearts a flow of lust is stirred. **"When confronted with a smooth and supple body, their minds become attached to lustful conduct and from both male and female organs will come spontaneous secretions."** When they see a particularly attractive person they have thoughts of sexual desire. With that, their essence flows of itself. Strange, isn't it?

Sutra:

"Ananda, although the kinds of love differ, their flow and oppression is the same. With this moisture, one cannot ascend, but will naturally fall. This is called the 'internal aspect.'

Commentary:

Ananda, although the kinds of love differ – although there are various kinds of love – **their flow and oppression is the same**. Their currents and enticements are the same. **With this moisture,**

one cannot ascend, but will naturally fall. Emotion sends one down. **This is called the 'internal aspect.'**

I2 The external aspect belongs to thought and so one is able to ascend.

Sutra:

"Ananda, the 'external aspect' refers to what happens outside living beings. Because of longing and yearning, they invent the fallacy of discursive thought. When this reasoning accumulates without cease, it can create ascending vapors.

Commentary:

"Ananda, the 'external aspect' refers to what happens outside living beings. Because of longing and yearning, they invent the fallacy of discursive thought." The "long-mg and yearning" also refer to love. The "discursive thought" is in fact false thought, which accumulates. **"When this reasoning accumulates without cease, it can create ascending vapors."** You think of it from all angles. You think about it today and you continue thinking about it to-morrow. You thought about it during your last life; you're thinking about it in this life. You thought about it in former kalpas and you think about it now in this kalpa. No one knows how long you've been thinking. And you never rest. However, from this continual thinking, a special response can occur, which is an "uplifting (ascending) motion of spirit."

Sutra:

"That is why when living beings uphold the prohibitive precepts in their minds, their bodies will be buoyant and feel light and clear. When they uphold mantra seals in their minds, they will command a heroic and resolute perspective. When they have the desire in their minds to be born in the heavens, in their dreams they will have thoughts of flying and ascending. When they cherish the Buddhalands in their minds, then the sagely realms will appear in a shimmering vision, and they will serve the good and wise advisors with little thought for their own lives.

Commentary:

“That is why when living beings uphold the prohibitive precepts in their minds, their bodies will be buoyant and feel light and clear.” This can happen to any living being. “Prohibitive” refers to things which one cannot do. These precepts keep people from doing bad things, from creating evil. Don’t do the things you should not do, and then you are upholding the precepts in your mind. If your mind holds he precepts, then your body will experience a sensation of lightness. You feel almost like you’re floating when you walk. And your mind will be extremely pure and clean. **“When they uphold mantra seals in their minds, they will command a heroic and resolute perspective.”** If you specialize in holding the mantras in your mind – there are many mantras and this refers to any one of them – you will have a response. The “seal” refers to the mind-to-mind seal as it pertains to mantras. When you recite the mantra, a certain response occurs. If you are a specialist in mantras, you will have a heroic air about you when you gaze around. Your glance will be powerful and determined. You will know no fear. **“When they have the desire in their minds to be born in the heavens, in their dreams they will have thoughts of flying and ascending.”** In your dreams you’ll be able to fly and to soar into empty space. That’s all because you want to go to the heavens.

“When they cherish the Buddhalands in their minds, then the sagely realms will appear in a shimmering vision, and they will serve the good and wise advisors with little thought for their own lives.” If you’d like to get born in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, or some other Buddhaland, then the Western Pure Land will secretly appear with its pools of seven jewels and waters of the eight meritorious virtues, with its white cranes, egrets, parrots, and kalavinka birds, and with a myriad other states. It won’t be something others can see, but you will see it. Others will be unaware of it, but you will know. You will be able to see the Eastern Crystal World of Medicine Master Buddha as well. You will get to serve these good and wise advisors. You can draw near to them,

respect them, and make offerings to them. And you will have total disregard for your former lifestyle. Your very life itself will seem unimportant when faced with this opportunity to serve and draw near those good and wise advisors. Nothing you might do will seem as important to you as serving these sages.

Sutra:

"Ananda, although the thought varies, the lightness and uplifting is the same. With flight and ascension, one will not sink, but will naturally become transcendent. This is called the External Aspect.

Commentary:

"Ananda, although the thought varies, the lightness and uplifting is the same." Although the things one thinks about are different, the comfort and light ease that one attains, the feeling of floating, is the same. **"With flight and ascension, one will not sink, but will naturally become transcendent."** With this upward movement one will not fall downward. "Transcendent" means rising above everything, surpassing all. **"This is called the External Aspect."**

H3 He specifically describes the rising or sinking at death.
I1 The appearances that manifest at the time of death.

Sutra:

"Ananda, all beings in the world are caught up in the continuity of birth and death. Birth happens because of their habitual tendencies; death comes through flow and change. When they are on the verge of dying, but when the final warmth has not left their bodies, all the good and evil they have done in that life suddenly and simultaneously manifests. They experience the intermingling of two habits: an abhorrence of death and an attraction to life.

Commentary:

The Buddha calls again, "**Ananda,** do you know that **all beings in the world are caught up in the continuity of birth and**

death?” They get born and die, die and get reborn, again and again in a never-ending cycle. They spin on the wheel of the six paths of rebirth. **Birth happens because of their habitual tendencies.** Birth is something living beings want. They tend toward it. **Death comes through flow and change.** When they die, they follow their karmic retribution to turn again in rebirth. According to the kind of karma they have created, they will revolve on the wheel.

“When they are on the verge of dying, but when the final warmth has not left their bodies, all the good and evil they have done in that life suddenly and simultaneously manifests.” “The final warmth has not left their bodies” means that the six consciousnesses and the seventh consciousness have passed out of the body, but the eighth consciousness still remains. Its passage will be marked by warmth, that is, the place on the body where the eighth consciousness leaves will be warm to the touch. For instance, if he eighth consciousness leaves through the soles of the feet, that spot will be warm. If it leaves from the legs, he legs will be warm. If it departs from the waist, the waist will be warm. If it goes out the top of the head, the top of the head will be warm. That’s the “final warmth” that’s mentioned here in the text. Before the eighth consciousness goes, it is referred to as the “present skandha body.” Once it leaves the body it is the body between the skandhas, or “intermediate skandha body.” So the text here refers to the present skandha body, before it has left the physical body. If one cultivates well, the skandha body is a Buddha. If one does not cultivate, it is a ghost. So when people ask, “Are there really ghosts?” they must first ask themselves if there are Buddhas. If they know there are Buddhas, then of course there are ghosts as well. If you are not sure that there are Buddhas or ghosts, ask yourself if there are people. If you acknowledge the fact that there are people, then you will know that there are also Buddhas and ghosts, because they are all different aspects of the same thing.

After one dies then, the eighth consciousness is called the intermediate skandha body. Before one dies it is called the present skandha body. It is also known as the “soul” and as the “Buddha

nature.” When a person is on the verge of death, the good and evil he or she has done is revealed and a reckoning is at hand. Depending on what one did, one will have to undergo retribution or reward. If one did good, one can get rebirth in the heavens; if one did evil, one falls into the hells. If you did more in the way of good deeds and meritorious acts, then you can leave from your head. If you did more in the way of committing crimes and creating offenses, then you’ll leave from your feet. Obviously then, to leave from the upper part of one’s body means one will gain a higher rebirth, whereas to leave from the lower part means one is going to fall. One’s kind of rebirth is evident at death. **“They experience the intermingling of two habits: an abhorrence of death and an attraction to life.”** They are repelled and attracted when confronted with death and birth.

I2 The scale of ascending and falling.
J1 Ascent with no fall.

Sutra:

“Endowed solely with thought, they will fly and can certainly be reborn in the heavens above. If they fly from the heart, and if they have blessings and wisdom, as well as pure vows, then their hearts will spontaneously open and they will see the Buddhas of the ten directions and all their pure lands and they will be reborn in whichever one they wish.

Commentary:

“Endowed solely with thought,” means that the person has no emotion, no *yin*, but has only reason, which belongs to *yang*. “Solely” means it is present to the exclusion of any other mental process. There is only thought, nothing else. It is a kind of true sincerity.

People’s thoughts are such that they govern what happens. For instance, eating, drinking, and smoking all come about based on thought. First one thinks about it and then one does it. Conversely, if one decides not to do something, that thing won’t be done. “If I want to eat something good, I go buy some good things to eat. If I

want something nice to wear, I go buy it." The same is true for drinking. If one is thirsty, one goes out and gets some brandy, whiskey, rum, or beer. Just mentioning it is enough to make some people's mouths water. People who like to smoke are always mulling over the best brands of cigarettes. They've always got their mind on these things. Then they meet a Good and Wise Advisor who tells them to stop smoking, stop eating meat, and stop drinking. Obediently they stop, but since heir minds habitually run to these things, they start having dreams about smoking cigarettes, drinking liquor, and eating meat. They don't actually do these things in their waking hours, but because the thought remains, they dream of indulging in them at night. When they awaken they regret heir conduct in the dream. "I've already stopped doing that. Why would I resort to it in a dream?" they admonish them-elves. As I've told you before, it's difficult to remain in control of yourself when you're sick and even more difficult to do so in a dream.

Endowed solely with thought, **"they will fly and can certainly be reborn in the heavens above. If they fly from the heart, and if they have blessings and wisdom, as well as pure vows, then their hearts will spontaneously open."** However, if one's thought is of the heart and one does not wish to be reborn in the heavens, but instead keeps blessings and wisdom in mind at all times, then, even better than o be born in the heavens, one may have made pure vows to be reborn in a Buddhaland. The Buddha is known as the Doubly Complete One; that is, he is complete in both blessings and wisdom. Aware of this, one wants to cultivate blessings and wisdom oneself.

But to cultivate blessings and not wisdom
is to be like an elephant wearing a necklace.
And to cultivate wisdom and not blessings
is to be an Arhat with an empty begging bowl.

The necklace is handsome and valuable, but it's all the elephant has; it doesn't have any thought-power, any wisdom. If you seek wisdom in your cultivation by studying the Sutras and sitting in

meditation, but fail to plant any blessings and are unable to practice giving, then you'll end up smart but hungry. To plant blessings means one should do meritorious and virtuous deeds, especially on the Buddhist holidays – the birthdays and anniversaries of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas – or on your own birthday, or on the first and the fifteenth of the lunar month. If you practice giving and create merit before the Triple Jewel, then you will amass blessings. If you do not do meritorious and virtuous deeds, then you won't have any blessings. If you concentrate on wisdom and don't develop blessings, then no one will make offerings to you when you become an Arhat. That's because on the cause ground you did not make offerings in your turn. So if you want people to make offerings to you when the time comes, you should make offerings to them now. It's as simple as the principle of

Planting melons, you get melons.
Planting beans, you get beans.

"Pure vows" means that before the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas you say:

I vow to be born in the Western Pure Land
With the nine grades of lotuses as my parents.
When the flower opens I will see the Buddha
and awaken to non-production.
Non-retreating Bodhisattvas will be my companions.

Or you may wish to be reborn in the Eastern Land. Any such vow is a pure one. "Their hearts will spontaneously open" means they will awaken **"and they will see the Buddhas of the ten directions and all their pure lands and they will be reborn in whichever one they wish."** If a person has blessings', wisdom, and vows, then at the end of his or her life he or she will see the Buddhas of the ten directions and be able to be reborn in whichever pure land he or she wants.

"When they have more thought than emotion, they are not quite as ethereal and so they become flying immortals, great mighty ghost kings, space traveling-yakshas, or earth-traveling rakshasas who roam the form heavens, going where they please without obstruction.

Commentary:

""When they have more thought than emotion, they are not quite as ethereal." "Emotion" can be defined as sentience. It is said that,

> *Those with sentience and those lacking sentience*
> *Have the sane potential for knowledge of all modes.*

"Sentience," in turn, is defined as having thought and feeling. Insentient objects include grasses, trees, and so forth. It is said,

> *People are not grass and trees,*
> *Who among them doesn't have emotion?*

That's just a way of rationalizing. "Everybody's got emotion." True, everyone does. And when is it evident? In youth. That's why the character "emotion" (*qing* 情) is made up of the word for mind (*xin* 心) and the character for youth (*qing* 青). When we get right down to it, we're talking here about emotional love. Basically, the word for emotion is not limited to that meaning, but that's the use of it here.

Young men and women talk all the time about love and emotion. Why? Because they don't really know about it. They never finish talking about love and emotion. Day in and day out, month after month, year after year that's the entire topic of conversation. Young people become totally engrossed in emotion. It confuses them. It's said,

> *Weighed down by karma and confused by emotion*
> *One is a common person.*

Confusion is a kind of attachment, the inability to let go. here does emotion come from? From your mind. Where does he mind come from? From your nature. That's why it's said,

> *The nature flows out and becomes emotion.*
> *The emotion flows out into desire.*

The "out" means "down." As when,

> *The superior person's aims are lofty.*
> *The petty person's aims are base.*

When a person goes down, down, down and reaches the level of desire, then the fire of desire consumes the body. One totally loses control. It happens to both men and women. They lose self-control.

"Thought" is persistent thought. This character also contains the character for "mind." It, too, comes from the mind. At first the mind has not moved, but with thought, something appears in the mind. So the character for thought (*xiang* 想) is the character for "appearance" (*xiang* 相) over the character for "mind" (*xin* 心). Whatever you think about appears. This character is quite descriptive. For instance, you think about drinking, and an image of wine appears in your mind. If you're thinking about eating meat, a piece of meat appears in your mind. It's the same for anything you think about from the affairs of state to your own private matters. The Sutras talk about there being no appearance of self, no appearance of others, no appearance of people, and no appearance of a life-span. But with thought, there are appearances. Is thought right then or wrong? Basically, it, too, is not right. But since people are attached to appearances, they end up with thought.

When the thought is more than the emotion, "they are not quite as ethereal." This can be explained in two ways. It can mean that they don't get far. Their flight is limited. But to hold strictly to that interpretation doesn't exactly fit the context here. A better way to explain it is that their flight is not very much less extensive than the kind of flight described in the previous section. "Not quite as

ethereal” then, would mean that they can go quite far. How far? **“They become flying immortals.”** They are such that,

In the morning they can roam
a hundred thousand miles,
And in the evening
go to nine thousand altars.

Or they become “**great mighty ghost kings**, or **space traveling-yakshas, or earth-traveling rakshasas.**” These kinds of beings have already been described. They can **“roam the form heavens, going where they please without obstruction.”** Nothing hinders their travel. Nothing stops them.

Sutra:

“Among them may be some with good vows and good hearts who protect and uphold my Dharma. Perhaps they protect the pure precepts by following and supporting those who hold precepts. Perhaps they protect spiritual mantras by following and supporting those who hold mantras. Perhaps they protect Ch’an samadhi by guarding and comforting those who are patient with dharmas. These beings are close at hand beneath the Thus Come One’s seat.

Commentary:

“**Among them,** among the great mighty ghost kings, space-travelling yakshas, and other such beings, **may be some with good vows and good hearts who protect and uphold my Dharma.**” By “my Dharma” Shakyamuni Buddha is referring to the Buddhadharma. **“Perhaps they protect the pure precepts by following and supporting those who hold precepts.”** Maybe they make the wholesome vow to guard and uphold the precepts spoken by the Buddhas. Then they will also follow and guard people who hold the precepts. They make sure that everything for these people who uphold the precepts is auspicious and in accord with their wishes. No difficulties or troubles will arise for them. **“Perhaps they protect spiritual mantras by following and supporting those**

who hold mantras.” Maybe they protect the Shurangama Mantra, the Great Compassion Mantra, or any of the other various mantras. This is the kind of resolve they have. They follow along after the people who uphold mantras and protect them day and night. **“Perhaps they protect Ch’an samadhi by guarding and comforting those who are patient with dharmas.”** Maybe some of these beings make the good vow that in the future they will protect people who investigate Ch’an and sit in meditation, so that they obtain Ch’an samadhi. They help them obtain patience with dharmas so that they can endure any dharma whatever. **“These beings are close at hand beneath the Thus Come One’s seat.”** These beings who have made good vows and are Dharma protectors are always able to be beneath the Thus Some One’s seat and to hear the Dharma spoken.

J2 No ascent and no fall.

Sutra:

“When their thought and emotion are of equal proportions, they cannot fly and they do not fall, but are born in the human realm. If their thought is bright, their wits are keen. If their emotion is dark, their wits are dull.

Commentary:

With ninety-percent thought and ten percent emotion, one gains a higher rebirth. With ninety percent emotion and ten percent thought, it is certain that one will fall into the hells. Now **“when their thought and emotion are of equal proportions, they cannot fly and they do not fall, but are born in the human realm.”** With fifty percent thought and fifty percent emotion, there is a balance. They can’t fly to the heavens to be a god or an immortal, and they can’t fall into the hells to become a hungry ghost. Where do they end up? Right where you and I are now. To be born into the human realm does not mean one will remain forever in the human realm. The human realm is nothing more than a transit stop – a place to transfer to the next place. “From the human realm what will one transfer to?” you wonder. Well, in order to get to the

human realm you had to have fifty percent thought and fifty percent emotion. All you have to do is take a look and see if you've got more emotion now or more thought. If you've got more emotion, your next transfer will be to the hells. If you've got more thought, your next transfer will be to the heavens. If you are devoid of emotion, you can transfer to the Buddhas' fruition, for then you are pure *yang*, without any *yin*. If you have ten percent emotion, you have *yin*. If you don't have any emotion, you are pure *yang* and can become a Buddha.

"If their thought is bright, their wits are keen. If their emotion is dark, their wits are dull." This is the point of transfer. The more you think, the smarter you get and the more you understand. You attain wisdom if you cultivate and make progress day-by-day. In this way your light grows a little more day-by-day. It keeps increasing until it is the same as the light of the Buddhas. That's what's meant by "if their thoughts are bright, their wits are keen."

Emotion is said to be *yin*, because it is a private matter. Thought is very open and out front, very public and bright. To cultivate, investigate Ch'an, sit in meditation, study the Buddhadharma, and listen to the Sutras are proper activities. From them you will gain keen intelligence. But love and emotion can't be discussed in a crowd. Rather, a man and woman must go to the park or the seashore or beneath a tree alone to speak in whispers. They must slowly talk things over in secret. This is what is meant by emotion being "dark." Things which others cannot see are dark. The darker they get, the less light there is for them to see by, and "their wits are dull." They go into the forest where they can't see the sky. Or they get into cars or on boats. They go to places where there are few people; is to be "dark." This belongs to *yin* and causes people be stupid and dull-witted. They chat and chat and become stupider and stupider until eventually they fall into a bottomless pit. That's why emotion makes you fall. You talk together until you both slip and fall into the sea of suffering. Then it won't be easy to get out; you'll have make a tremendous effort. Unless you're lucky enough to

have a Good and Wise Advisor who grabs you by the hand and shouts, “Get out!” getting out will be very difficult.

J3 Fall with no ascent.

Sutra:

“When they have more emotion than thought, they enter the animal realm. With heavier emotion, they become fur-bearing beasts; with lighter emotion, they become winged creatures.

Commentary:

“When they have more emotion than thought, they enter the animal realm. With heavier emotion, they become fur-bearing beasts.” People with heavy emotion end up getting born as cows, horses, sheep and the like. Do you see how dangerous it is? You’d better be careful: That’s why I say the *Shurangama Sutra* is so important. This section shows exactly the point at which people and animals cross paths. One wrong step and you end up an animal. If you’re off by just a little, then it gets you. **“With lighter emotion, they become winged creatures.”** This refers to a slight variation in the degree of emotion on the part of these animals. The creatures that fly still have a bit of thought about them. Did you ever wonder why birds are so colorful? It’s because when they were human beings, they liked to wear colorful clothes. They would get all dressed up and then constantly admire themselves. The combination of excessive attention to clothing and a lot of emotion with a little thought caused them to fall into the realm of birds. Some birds are really exquisite. They must have been people who dressed especially well. Because of their emotion, they end up as animals, but the degree of their emotion is slightly less than that of beasts, and so they become birds.

Sutra:

“When they have seventy percent emotion and thirty percent thought, they fall beneath the wheel of water into the regions of fire, where they come into contact with steam which is itself like a terrible blaze. In the bodies of hungry ghosts, they

are constantly burned by that fire. Even water harms them, and they have nothing to eat or drink for hundreds of thousands of kalpas.

Commentary:

With sixty percent emotion and forty percent thought, one falls into the animal realm. With sixty percent thought and forty percent emotion, one can gain a higher rebirth. Now, **"When they have seventy percent emotion and thirty percent thought, they fall beneath the wheel of water into the regions of fire, where they come into contact with steam which is itself like a terrible blaze."** Beneath the water cycle is fire. Volcanoes are a common example which proves that fire resides beneath the water level. **"In the bodies of hungry ghosts, they are constantly burned by that fire."** At that time, they take on the bodies of hungry ghosts, and it would be too late for them if they decided they'd rather be birds or beasts. There are a myriad kinds of hungry ghosts. The worst kind there is to be is the one whose throat is as thin as a needle and whose stomach is as big as a drum. **"Even water harms them, and they have nothing to eat or drink for hundreds of thousands of kalpas."** They don't even have a drop of water to drink. Why not? Because their karma is such that when they see water, it turns to a raging fire. Gods see water as crystal. Fish, shrimp, oysters, and things of the sea look upon water as their palace – their home. They live in it and therefore don't see it, in the same way that people live in air but aren't aware of it. If we people didn't have air, we would die. It's said that people must eat to live, but they also must have air to breathe. But do we see air? No. Fish see water as their home, and people see water as water, but ghosts see water as fire. Why don't we see it as fire? If you want to know the difference, you can try being a ghost and find out. But you protest that you'd like to know without having to be a ghost. All right, I can tell you. It's because of karmic obstacles. It's a result of the karma that they themselves created. If you make the karma that sends you into the body of a hungry ghost, then you will perceive water as fire. If you still don't believe it, you can try it out. But if you do, and really turn into a

hungry ghost, it will be very difficult to get to be a person again. It won't be easy to return. So now I'm telling you, and the best would be to believe me, because I'm really not cheating you. Then you don't have to go try it out for yourself.

As a hungry ghost one is burned to death, but after a while one revives and then has to go through being burned to death again. In that way, one undergoes birth after birth and death after death as a ghost. Because they see water as fire, the ghosts have nothing to drink, and they can't eat, either. How long does this go on? It goes on for hundreds of thousands of kalpas.

Sutra:

"When they have ninety percent emotion and ten percent thought, they fall through the wheel of fire until their bodies enter wind and fire, in a region where the two interact. With lighter emotion they are born in the intermittent hell; with heavier emotion they are born in the Unintermittent Hell.

Commentary:

"When they have ninety percent emotion and ten percent thought, they fall through the wheel of fire until their bodies enter wind and fire, in a region where the two interact." In this place there's not only fire but a wind that whips up the fire so that it burns even more fiercely. **"With lighter emotion they are born in the intermittent hell; with heavier emotion they are born in the Unintermittent Hell."**

Sutra:

"When they are possessed entirely of emotion, they sink into the Avici Hell. If the emotion has gone into their hearts so that they slander the Great Vehicle, defame the Buddha's pure precepts, speak crazy and false dharma, are greedy for offerings from the faithful, recklessly accept the respect of others, commit the five rebellious acts and the ten major offenses, then they are further reborn in Avici Hells throughout the ten directions.

Commentary:

"**When they are possessed entirely of emotion –** when they have no thought, only emotion – **they sink into the Avici Hell. If the emotion has gone into their hearts –** if their minds are totally governed by emotion – **so that they slander the Great Vehicle**": They make judgments about things with their emotions and as a result they take right to be wrong and wrong to be right. They take black to be white and white to be black. They are totally unreasonable. They always oppose what others say. If you say, "Don't do things that are not good," they come back with, "What's there to be afraid of?" Their motto is "Eat meat, drink wine, and pass the time. The Buddha is only a figment of the imagination." They argue that "Your mind is the Buddha and the Buddha is your mind." That's the kind of deviant knowledge and deviant views they have.

Their views become so deviant that they **"defame the Buddha's pure precepts."** "Don't take the precepts," they say. "What do you want to do that for? You end up with a bunch of precepts controlling you. If you don't take the precepts, see how free you'll be." In fact, if one does not take the precepts, it is very, very easy to end up in the hells. Do you call that freedom? But if you receive the precepts and then use them as a guide to govern yourself – if you receive the precepts and then govern yourself by the appearance, the dharma, and the substance of the precepts, it's not so likely that you'll fall into the hells. Even if you do fall into the hells, you'll get out much more quickly. But if you advocate not taking the precepts in order to be free, then when you fall into the hells there's no guarantee when you'll get out again. If you take the precepts, then a long term in the hells gets cut to a short term. It's as if you were a president's aide and broke some major law and were caught. Just a note from the President would suffice to effect your release. Without that help, it might be a long time before you were released. If you have the precepts for protection, then the suffering you have to endure for having committed major offenses will be lessened significantly. So don't outsmart yourself by deciding not to take the precepts. It's better to take the precepts. A

living being who receives the Buddha's precepts enters into the position of a Buddha.

Don't slander the Buddha's precepts, and don't **"speak crazy and false dharma."** Don't deny cause and effect. Don't say things like "There's no cause and no effect; people are just Buddhas, after all. There's no need to cultivate. Eat meat, drink, and be merry, because no matter what you do, you still can become a Buddha. It's really easy to become a Buddha."

Right, it is easy to become a Buddha, but the way to do it is to get rid of your faults. There aren't any Buddhas who have faults. They are all pure and undefiled. They didn't become Buddhas by being filthy and full of karmic offenses. They didn't become Buddhas by drinking wine and eating meat. If that's the way it was, then the Buddha would not have had to speak the precepts.

Don't be **"greedy for offerings from the faithful."** Don't scheme to get people to believe in you, to give you gifts, to make offerings to you. Don't think about how you'd have more money if you took more disciples. I never discuss money with my disciples. Usually when people take disciples it's made clear from the start that they should give at least fifty or sixty dollars just to take refuge. But I don't pay attention to that kind of thing.

These kinds of beings also **"recklessly accept the respect of others."** Or they **"commit the five rebellious acts,"** which are killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing an Arhat, shedding the Buddha's blood, and breaking up the harmony of the Sangha. Or they commit **"the ten major offenses,"** that is, they violate the ten major Bodhisattva Precepts. Having committed these grave offenses, **"then they are further reborn in Avici Hells throughout the ten directions."** After they have undergone suffering in the Avici Hell of this world they go to Avici Hells in every world in the ten directions. Can you imagine how long a time that would take? When this hell is finished, they are transported to another Avici Hell. When that Avici Hell is destroyed, they move on to the next Avici Hell. It's endless. And so Devadatta, the one

who tried to compete with the Buddha, fell into the hells alive. He's still suffering in the hells. From the time of Shakyamuni Buddha until now he's been undergoing hellish suffering, but in fact that's just the blink of an eye.

H4 He concludes that there are places where both individual and collective punishment are undergone.

Sutra:

"Although one receives one's due according to the evil karma one has created, a group can undergo an identical lot, and there are definite places where it occurs.

Commentary:

"Although one receives one's due according to the evil karma one has created," by slandering the Great Vehicle Dharma Masters, by defaming the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, by committing the five rebellious acts and the ten major offenses, **"a group can undergo an identical lot, and there are definite places where it occurs."** Al though they fall into the hells because of what they themselves have done – they create the karma and undergo the retribution – still, a group can undergo similar retribution, and it can happen in a fixed and certain place. There are definite places where they create the karma, and there are definite places where they undergo the retribution.

Destiny of Hells

G2 He specifically describes the various causes and results of falling and rising.
H1 Destiny of hells.
I1 Traces prior instruction and introduces this.

Sutra:

"Ananda, it all comes from the karmic responses which living beings themselves invoke. They create ten habitual causes and undergo six interacting retributions.

Commentary:

Ananda, it all comes from the karmic responses which living beings themselves invoke. They give rise to delusion, create karma, and undergo retribution. **They create ten habitual causes and undergo six interacting retributions.** The retributions are interconnected.

I2 Explains ten causes.
J1 Habits of lust.

Sutra:

"What are the ten causes? Ananda, the first consists of habits of lust and reciprocal interactions which give rise to mutual rubbing. When this rubbing continues without cease, it produces a tremendous raging fire within which movement occurs, just as warmth arises between a person's hands when he rubs them together.

Commentary:

"**What are the ten causes? Ananda,** I will now tell you in detail. **The first consists of habits of lust and reciprocal interactions.** The habits of lust bring men and women together, and their interactions **give rise to mutual rubbing. When this rubbing continues without cease, it produces a tremendous raging fire within which movement occurs.** The light of fire arises between them and has a movement of its own, **just as warmth arises between a person's hands when he rubs them together.**

Sutra:

"Because these two habits set each other ablaze, there come into being the iron bed, the copper pillar, and other such experiences.

Commentary:

"Because these two habits": The "two habits" refer to one's past habits of lust which combine with one's present habits of lust. These two habits **"set each other ablaze, there come into being the iron bed, the copper pillar, and other such experiences."** These are the names of specific hells. They are brought into being because people have sexual desire which is too heavy. They have created too much karma involving lust and so they must undergo this retribution.

Sutra:

"Therefore the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon the practice of lust and name it the 'fire of desire.' Bodhisattvas avoid desire as they would a fiery pit.

Commentary:

"Therefore the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon the practice of lust and name it the 'fire of desire.'" They tell you that the fire of desire burns up the body. **"Bodhisattvas avoid desire as they would a fiery pit."** They see that staying away from lustful activity is as important as avoiding a fiery pit. You don't want to see the fiery pit and deliberately jump into it. If

you do, it's for sure you'll burn to death. So Bodhisattvas stay far away from lust and sexual desire. They do not give rise to thoughts of sexual desire.

J2 Habits of greed.

Sutra:

"The second consists of habits of greed and intermingled scheming which give rise to a suction. When this suction becomes dominant and incessant, it produces intense cold and solid ice where freezing occurs, just as a sensation of cold is experienced when a person draws in a blast of wind through his mouth.

Commentary:

"The second consists of habits of greed and intermingled scheming which give rise to a suction." Greed is like a magnet which attracts things to it. **"When this suction becomes dominant and incessant" –** people who experience insatiable greed are always trying to figure out how to get things and make them their own. When greed reaches this extreme, **"it produces intense cold and solid ice where freezing occurs."** These habits produce a sensation of freezing cold, **"just as a sensation of cold is experienced when a person draws in a blast of wind through his mouth."**

Sutra:

"Because these two habits clash together, there come into being chattering, whimpering and shuddering; blue, red, and white lotuses; cold and ice; and other such experiences.

Therefore the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon excessive seeking and name it "the water of greed". Bodhisattvas avoid greed as they would a sea of pestilence.

Commentary:

"**Because these two habits –** one's past greed and one's present greed **– clash together –** the habits of grabbing and seizing feed on

one another until **there come into being chattering, whimpering and shuddering.**” The Chinese characters used here indicate the sounds made by beings suffering in these freezing hells when undergoing the tortures of extreme cold. “*Cha cha, bwo bwo, lwo lwo*” are here translated as “chattering, whimpering, and shuddering.” **“Blue, red, and white lotuses”** indicate the shapes the ice freezes into in these hells. The beings undergo **“cold and ice; and other such experiences.”**

J3 Habits of arrogance.

Sutra:

“The third consists of habits of arrogance and resulting friction which give rise to mutual intimidation. When it accelerates without cease, it produces torrents and rapids which create restless waves of water, just as water is produced when a person continuously works his tongue in an effort to taste flavors.

Commentary:

“The third consists of habits of arrogance and resulting friction.” “Arrogance” refers to self-satisfaction. One is arrogant when one thinks one is better than others. Such thoughts **“give rise to mutual intimidation.”** One looks down on others. **“When it accelerates without cease, it produces torrents and rapids which create restless waves of water.”** This refers to the hell of boiling oil, the hell of rapids, the hell of scalding soup, and so forth. It is **“just as water is produced when a person continuously works his tongue in an effort to taste flavors.”** Someone keeps trying to taste the flavor of his own mouth. The effort will produce saliva.

Sutra:

“Because these two habits incite one another, there come into being the River of Blood, the River of Ashes, the Burning Sand, the Poisonous Sea, the Molten Copper which is poured

over one or which must be swallowed, and other such experiences.

Commentary:

"Because these two habits incite one another"-arrogant attitudes from the past combine with one's self-satisfaction in the present **–** "**there come into being** many kinds of hells: The Hell of **the River of Blood,** the Hell of **the River of Ashes,** the Hell of **the Burning Sand,** the Hell of **the Poisonous Sea,** the Hell of **the Molten Copper which is poured over one,** the Hell where molten copper **must be swallowed, and other such experiences."**

Sutra:

"Therefore, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon self-satisfaction and name it 'drinking the water of stupidity.' Bodhisattvas avoid arrogance as they would a huge deluge.

Commentary:

It's as stinking as a place where a lot of people go to relieve themselves.

J4 Habits of hatred.

Sutra:

"The fourth consists of habits of hatred which give rise to mutual defiance. When this defiance binds one without cease, one's heart becomes so hot that it catches fire, and the molten vapor turns into metal.

"From it is produced the Mountain of Knives, the Iron Cudgel, the Tree of Swords, the Wheel of Swords, Axes and Halberds, and Spears and Saws. It is like the intent to kill surging forth when a person meets a mortal enemy, so that he is roused to action.

Commentary:

"The fourth consists of habits of hatred which give rise to mutual defiance." "Defiance" means that you have wronged me

and I have wronged you. **"When this defiance binds one without cease, one's heart becomes so hot that it catches fire, and the molten vapor turns into metal."** Your heart feels hot and you give rise to the fire of ignorance. That kind of energy is so violent that it turns into metal. **"From it is produced the Mountain of Knives."** Because the molten energy from one's anger forms into metal, the Hell of the Mountain of Knives, the Hell of **the Iron Cudgel,** the Hell of **the Tree of Swords,** the Hell of **the Wheel of Swords,** the Hell of **Axes and Halberds,** the Hell of **Spears and Saws,** and the like all come into being. **It is like the intent to kill surging forth when a person meets a mortal enemy,** someone he bears a heavy grudge against, **so that he is roused to action.** His obsession to kill takes over.

Sutra:

"Because these two habits clash with one another, there come into being castration and hacking, beheading and mutilation, filing and sticking, flogging and beating, and other such experiences.

Commentary:

"**Because these two habits –** past hatred and present hatred – **clash with one another, there come into being castration and hacking.**" This is one kind of hell. "**Beheading –** being killed; **mutilation –** having one's arms or legs chopped off or one's bones ground to powder: **filing and sticking –** being filed or being stuck with thorns; **flogging and beating**; **and other such experiences**" are all further kinds of hells.

Sutra:

"Therefore, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon hatred and name it 'sharp knives and swords.' Bodhisattvas avoid hatred as they would their own execution.

Commentary:

"Therefore, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon hatred and name it 'sharp knives and swords.'" Anger is

just like a keen knife or a sharp sword. **"Bodhisattvas avoid hatred as they would their own execution."** Bodhisattvas regard anger and hatred as they would being killed by someone.

J5 Habits of deception.

Sutra:

"The fifth consists of habits of deception and misleading involvements which give rise to mutual guile. When such maneuvering continues without cease, it produces the ropes and wood of a gallows for hanging, like the grass and trees that grow when water saturates a field.

Commentary:

"The fifth consists of habits of deception and misleading involvements which give rise to mutual guile." "Deception" is a lack of honesty. "Misleading" means people getting involved in cheating and deceiving one another. You cheat me with some scheme and then I think up some trick to cheat you. **"When such maneuvering continues without cease, it produces the ropes and wood of a gallows for hanging."** "Maneuvering" refers to the deceptive devices. The ropes and wood are used to construct a gallows to hang the person. This is a certain hell. It is **"like the grass and trees that grow when water saturates a field."** Deception nourishes the hell of ropes and wood in the same way.

Sutra:

"Because the two habits perpetuate one another, there come into being handcuffs and fetters, cangues and locks, whips and clubs, sticks and cudgels, and other such experiences.

Commentary:

"Because the two habits perpetuate one another, there come into being handcuffs and fetters." The habits of deception from the past combine with the habits of deception in the present to make a protracted pattern of deception. These "handcuffs and fetters" are implements of punishment, as are **"cangues and locks."** When one

is bound by this kind of thing, one cannot move about freely, much less escape. Or perhaps one is beaten with **"whips and clubs, sticks and cudgels, and other such experiences."** What is the origin of these experiences? How do they come into being? They come from deception.

Sutra:

"Therefore, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon deception and name it a 'treacherous crook.' Bodhisattvas fear deception as they would a savage wolf.

Commentary:

Being "treacherous" means that when one speaks, one doesn't tell the truth.

J6 Habits of lying.

Sutra:

"The sixth consists of habits of lying and combined fraudulence which give rise to mutual cheating. When false accusations continue without cease, one becomes adept at corruption.

"From this there come into being Dust and Dirt, Excrement and Urine, filth, stench, and impurities. It is like the obscuring of everyone's vision when the dust is stirred up by the wind.

Commentary:

"The sixth consists of habits of lying and combined fraudulence which give rise to mutual cheating." "Lying" means not telling the truth, saying things that are false. "Combined fraudulence" means that people lie in order to cheat one another. "Mutual cheating" means that people are not straight with one another. What they say is not true. **"When false accusations continue without cease, one becomes adept at corruption."** People end up accusing each other in ways which are not justified. If they continue in this vein, they end up being masters of deception. Everything they do is against the law. "**From this there**

come into being the hell of **Dust and Dirt,** and the hell of **Excrement and Urine**. These hells are full of **filth, stench, and impurities. It is like the obscuring of everyone's vision when the dust is stirred up by the wind."** That's what this particular karmic obstacle is like. The dust is so thick you can't even see it clearly, let alone anything else.

Sutra:

"Because these two habits augment one another, there come into being Sinking and Drowning, Tossing and Pitching, Flying and Falling, Floating and Submerging, and other such experiences.

Commentary:

""Because these two habits augment one another, there come into being Sinking and Drowning." The habits of lying from the past combine with the habits of lying in the present to bring about these various hells. **"Tossing and Pitching"** means that one is tossed up high and then allowed to plummet down. **"Flying and Falling"** is also a case of being rocketed off into space and then left to fall back down. **"Floating and Submerging"** means one is left afloat at sea. These hells **"and other such experiences"** must be undergone.

Sutra:

"Therefore, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon lying and name it 'robbery and murder.' Bodhisattvas regard lying as they would treading on a venomous snake.

Commentary:

"Therefore, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon lying and name it 'robbery and murder.'" When they see people doing things to cheat others, they call it robbery and murder. **"Bodhisattvas regard lying as they would treading on a venomous snake."** Lying, too, is undesirable.

J7 Habits of animosity.

Sutra:

"The seventh consists of habits of animosity and interconnected enmity which give rise to grievances. From this there come into being Flying Rocks, Thrown Stones, Caskets and Closets, Cages on Wheels, Jars and Containers, and Bags and Rods. It is like someone harming others secretly – he harbors, cherishes, and nurtures evil.

Commentary:

"The seventh consists of habits of animosity and interconnected enmity which give rise to grievances." "Animosity" refers to resentment and can also mean the making of false accusations. False accusations cause suspicions to arise. In Chinese the word "grievances" (X) has a character which literally means to hold in the beak as a bird holds food. Here, someone harbors grievances and ill-will in his mouth and refuses to let it go. "**From this there come into being Flying Rocks,** and the hell of **Thrown Stones,** in which one is struck with pieces of rubble. Or one is closed up in a **casket** or in a **closet**, or put in a **cage on wheels**. Or the person is put into a **jar** and a fire is lit under it, so that the ghost gets cooked, **Bags and rods**: the ghost is put in a big bag and then beaten down. Inside he both suffocates and suffers the pain of beating. This kind of karma **is like someone harming others secretly – he harbors, cherishes, and nurtures evil.**" He's always brewing evil thoughts in his mind.

Sutra:

"Because these two habits swallow one another up, there come into being Tossing and Pitching, Seizing and Apprehending, Striking and Shooting, Casting Away and Pinching, and other such experiences.

Commentary:

"Because these two habits swallow one another up, there come into being Tossing and Pitching." The habit of animosity

from the past combines with the habit of animosity in the present in such a way that they devour one another. That is, if the karmic power of one's habits from the past is stronger, one will undergo retribution for the past deeds. If the power of the karma in the present life is the stronger, one will undergo retribution for it in this very life. That's what's meant by swallowing each other up. The ghost is tossed about or thrown for a distance, so that when he lands he will undergo pain and suffering. "**Seizing and Apprehending**": after he's tossed away, he is seized and brought back. **"Striking and Shooting, Casting Away and Pinching, and other such experiences"** are all undergone as retribution.

Sutra:

"Therefore, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon animosity and name it a 'disobedient and harmful ghost.' Bodhisattvas regard animosity as they would drinking poisonous wine.

Commentary:

"Therefore, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon animosity and name it a 'disobedient and harmful ghost.'" They regard conduct governed by animosity, resentment, and revenge as a disobedient and harmful ghost. Such conduct goes against the wishes of the person who is the object of the resentment and ends up by killing the person. **"Bodhisattvas regard animosity as they would drinking poisonous wine."** The Chinese language uses an adjective which is the name of a bird (*chen* X), a deadly species of falcon. If a feather from this particular variety of falcon is soaked in wine, the wine will be poisoned so thoroughly that a sip of it would be lethal, for there is no antidote for it.

J8 Habits of views.

Sutra:

"The eighth consists of habits of views and the admixture of understandings, such as satkayadrishti, views, moral prohibitions, grasping, and deviant insight into various kinds of

karma, which bring about opposition and produce mutual antagonism. From them there come into being court officials, deputies, certifiers, and registrars. They are like people traveling on a road, who meet each other coming and going.

Commentary:

"The eighth consists of habits of views and the admixture of understandings, such as satkayadrishti." These are habits which we all have. If you make proper use of views, they are an aid to your mind and nature. But if you use them incorrectly, if you have biases, then you can create bad karma. **"Satkayadrishti"** is a Sanskrit word which means "view of having a body." There are five kinds of views:

1. the view of having a body,
2. one-sided views,
3. the view of prohibitive morality,
4. views that grasp at views,
5. deviant views.

These have been explained in detail before. With the first view, people become attached to the view that their bodies are themselves and attached to the things around them as being their own. One-sided views are not in accord with the Middle Way. They fall into either the view of annihilationism or the view of externalism. With the former, one believes that death is like the extinguishment of a lamp – there is nothing that follows it. One doesn't believe in a soul or in rebirth. With the latter, one believes that if one is a person this life, one will be a person in every life. They think it is impossible for a person to undergo rebirth as an animal.

The third is an attachment to extremes of morality, like that found in some sects in India such as those that would follow the behavior of cows or dogs. The fourth, to have the view that grasps views, means being fraught with attachments. People with this view have very decided opinions and an overbearing view of self. There are also deviant views. "Satkayadrishti," **views, moral prohibi-**

tions, grasping, and deviant insight into various kinds of karma refer to these five views. One may have a bit of intelligence, but the principles one grasps at are deviant. Because they are not proper views, one creates karma, **"which bring about opposition and produce mutual antagonism."** With this kind of karma, one is always opposing other people and disagreeing with them. **"From them there come into being court officials, deputies, certifiers, and registrars."** They ask for certification and proof in writing; they insist upon records and the like. "These views **are like people traveling on a road, who meet each other coming and going.**"

Sutra:

"Because these two habits influence one another, there come into being official inquiries, baited questions, examinations, interrogations, public investigations, exposure, the youths who record good and evil, carrying the record books of the offenders' arguments and rationalizations, and other such experiences.

Commentary:

"Because these two habits influence one another, there come into being official inquiries." The two habits again refer to the habits involving the five views that one built up in former lives, coupled with the habits involving the five views which one continues to grasp hold of in this life. "Official inquiries means one is thoroughly questioned. **"Baited questions"** are raised when an examiner uses expedients to get you to admit your wrongdoings. This kind of thing happens in courts and also happens in the hells. **"Examinations"** means that after you've stated your case, the officials set about to examine its accuracy, step-by-step. They send people out to verify everything you've said. **"Interrogations"** bring everything out in the open, just as if it were to appear in a mirror. "**Public investigations** and **exposure**" do the same. **"The youths who record good and evil, carrying the record books of the offenders' arguments and rationalizations."** These youths are young employees of the hells who keep records on good and

evil done in the world. When your turn comes, they read out your record. If you try to argue or rationalize, they just find the page and place and read it out just as it actually happened. They have unquestionable proof, and your protestations are useless. These **and other such experiences** are the lot of those with deep-seated views.

Sutra:

"Therefore, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon evil views and name them the 'pit of views.' Bodhisattvas regard having false and one-sided views as they would standing on the edge of a steep ravine full of poison.

Commentary:

"Therefore, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon evil views and name them the 'pit of views.'" To them, the habits of evil views are like a deep abyss. It's fine if you don't fall in it, but if you do, it's not at all easy to climb back out. **"Bodhisattvas regard having false and one-sided views as they would standing on the edge of a steep ravine full of poison."** They are extremely dangerous, and it is very easy to slip and fall into them, so Bodhisattvas stay far away from them.

J9 Habits of injustice.

Sutra:

"The ninth consists of the habits of injustice and their interconnected support of one another; they result in instigating false charges and libeling. From them are produced crushing between mountains, crushing between rocks, stone rollers, stone grinders, plowing, and pulverizing. It is like a slanderous villain who engages in persecuting good people unjustly.

Commentary:

"The ninth consists of the habits of injustice and their interconnected support of one another; they result in instigating false charges and libeling." "Injustice" means to accuse someone without cause – to frame him. The person in question is in fact

innocent, but the government brings a case against him, or else some private individual sues him. It is biased and unfair. Included here are both the habits of being unjustly accused and of having done injustice to others. If you have unjustly accused others in the past, then those karmic obstacles will bind together with what goes on in this life. If you've never been unjustly accused, then perhaps the karma of it is being newly created in this lifetime. If you know that the person you are accusing did not actually commit the crime, and you are fully aware that you are bearing false witness, then you are being unjust. **"From them are produced crushing between mountains, crushing between rocks."** This is the Hell of Squeezing Mountains, in which mountains on all four sides close in and crush the offender. The same kind of experience is undergone in the hell of crushing rocks. You are squeezed into a meat patty. **"Stone rollers"** is another hell, as are **"stone grinders, plowing, and pulverizing."** If a person is a constant liar and bears false witness – if his speech is totally unreliable – then in this hell his tongue is cut out. Or it is grappled with an iron hook and pulled out, and then oxen drag plows back and forth across it. With "pulverizing" the offender is put into a grinder and ground to bits. **"It is like a slanderous villain who engages in persecuting good people unjustly."** "Slanderous" refers to any kind of unreliable speech or accusation.

Sutra:

"Because these two habits join ranks, there come into being pressing and pushing, bludgeons and compulsion, squeezing and straining, weighing and measuring, and other such experiences.

Commentary:

The karmic obstacles from former lives combine with the karma from one's conduct in the last life to cause one to be pressed or pushed down or to be beaten with bludgeons or to be forcefully controlled. Sometimes the ghost is put into a bag and then the blood is squeezed out of it, just the way apple sauce is made. Or one's

injustices are weighed and measured with precise accuracy. These are the kinds of experiences one has to undergo.

Sutra:

"Therefore, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon harmful accusations and name them 'a treacherous tiger.' Bodhisattvas regard injustice as they would a bolt of lightning.

Commentary:

"Therefore, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon harmful accusations and name them 'a treacherous tiger,'" even more vicious than an ordinary tiger. **"Bodhisattvas regard injustice as they would a bolt of lightning."** Bodhisattvas who cultivate the Way don't want to make any mistakes in cause and effect, and so they see that the habit of acting in unjust ways is as dangerous as encountering a bolt from the blue. It's just as frightening a situation and in the same way can strike people down dead on the spot.

J10 The habits of litigation.

Sutra:

"The tenth consists of the habits of litigation and the mutual disputations which give rise to covering. From them there are produced a look in the mirror and illumination by the lamp. It is like being in direct sunlight: there is no way one can hide one's shadow.

Commentary:

"The tenth consists of the habits of litigation and the mutual disputations which give rise to covering." "Litigation" means taking someone to court. It involves attorneys for the plaintiff and the defense. The offense involved is one of covering. That means that the evidence brought out in court by either side is not the whole truth. Each person claims to be right. In divorce cases, for example, the husband says he is in the right and the wife claims she is in the right. Actually, neither one is in the right, for if even one of them

were right, they would not be getting a divorce. The one in the right would simply forgive and forget if the other were being unreasonable, and no problems would arise. It's only when both parties refuse to yield that they have to get lawyers and go to court. Probably they feel sorry for the lawyers and are afraid they will starve to death if they don't give them some business. And of course the lawyer advises them to go to court because it's his livelihood. His fee can range from hundreds of dollars to thousands of dollars; it depends on the kind of case involved. He names his own price. "Disputations" refers to the arguments that ensue. Each side claims to be sane and reasonable. Why do they go to court? Because they are not open and frank with one another. They put on masks and cover up the truth, They are actually wrong, but they cover up their mistakes and bring up the points where they appear to be in accord with principle. They talk about all the things they did that were legal and avoid mentioning the things they did which were not. That's covering.

"From them there are produced a look in the mirror and illumination by the lamp." If you liked to get involved in litigations and to commit crimes when you were alive, then when you get to the hells, your crimes will be revealed in a mirror on a stand there. As you look into the mirror, every mistake you ever made in your entire life will appear in it. It's just like a movie: every frame shows up your actions quite vividly. With the "illumination by the lamp" you are left with no place to hide. Everything is clearly revealed. **"It is like being in direct sunlight: there is no way one can hide one's shadow."**

Sutra:

"Because these two habits bicker back and forth, there come into being evil companions, the mirror of karma, the fiery pearl, exposure of past karma, inquests, and other such experiences.

Commentary:

“Because these two habits bicker back and forth, there come into being evil companions.” Not only companions, but relatives are included here. One’s whole family may be bad. **“The mirror of karma”** is like the crime-revealing mirror mentioned above. **“The fiery pearl”** illuminates past offenses. **“Exposure of past karma”** reveals all the crimes you ever committed in whatever former life. **“Inquests”** happen when you don’t admit what you’ve done. Then the evidence is brought out against you. It’s proved for you to see.

Sutra:

“Therefore, all the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon covering and name it a ‘yin villain.’ Bodhisattvas regard covering as they would having to carry a mountain atop their heads while walking upon the sea.

Commentary:

“Therefore, all the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon covering and name it a ‘yin villain.’” Because of what’s just been described, Thus Come Ones look upon the practice of covering and call it a “yin” thief. **“Bodhisattvas regard covering as they would having to carry a mountain atop their heads while walking upon the sea.”** How could they ever stay up? It wouldn’t be possible. So Bodhisattvas don’t go to court.

I3 Explains the six retributions.
J1 A general introduction.

Sutra:

“What are the six retributions? Ananda, living beings create karma with their six consciousnesses. The evil retributions they call down upon themselves come from the six sense organs.

Commentary:

“**What are the six retributions? Ananda, living beings create karma with their six consciousnesses** of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. **The evil retributions they call down**

upon themselves when they create the evil karma **come from the six sense organs.**” They arise out of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

J2 Detailed explanation.
K1 Retribution of seeing.
L1 At the end of one's life, one sees one's own fall.

Sutra:

"What are the evil retributions that arise from the six sense organs? The first is the retribution of seeing, which beckons one and leads one to evil ends. The karma of seeing intermingles, so that at the time of death one first sees a raging conflagration which fills the ten directions. The deceased one's spiritual consciousness takes flight, but then falls. Riding on a wisp of smoke, it enters the Unintermittent Hell.

Commentary:

Above were discussed the ten habitual causes which lead to six interconnected retributions. They are called "interconnected" because although one of the six may have been the predominant factor in an offense, the others are all involved to some extent. They act as accomplices. For instance, the eyes commit some offense with regard to objects they see. So the eyes are the major offender; however, the ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind also play their parts in the crime. The major offender is the first to commit the offense, while the others help it along in their turn.

But you will remember that earlier the Buddhas of the ten directions spoke directly and simultaneously to Ananda, saying that it is from the six sense organs that Buddhas are accomplished and it is from the six sense organs that one falls into the hells. So now that we have come to the six interconnected retributions, you should remember that originally these six are capable of accomplishing Buddhahood. It's just that people don't know how to use them properly, and so within the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One they give rise to the false from within the true. The falseness that arises goes from the three subtle appearances to the six coarse

appearances to limitless boundless appearances. That's why it is said that there are eighty-four thousand kinds of karmic obstacles.

Why do we create so many karmic offenses? It's because we are not able to gain control. We can't keep ourselves from being turned by the experiences of the six sense objects. We are unable to return the hearing and listen to the self nature so that the nature can accomplish the Unsurpassed Way. Just because we don't return the hearing, we race out through the six sense organs to get at the six sense objects.

"What are the evil retributions that arise from the six sense organs? The first is the retribution of seeing, which beckons one and leads one to evil ends." Because the perceiving nature of the eye sees a form, one is influenced by that object of form. But in this process there are a lot of involvements and ramifications. From these appearances a lot of karmic offenses are created. A lot of karmic offenses result in a lot of evil retributions. **"The karma of seeing intermingles, so that at the time of death one first sees a raging conflagration which fills the ten directions."** The "karma" referred to here is offense-karma. With what does it "intermingle?" With the other five sense organs. They exchange opinions, and their karma gets mixed up together. Being influenced by the objects of sight in this way, one chases after sounds and pursues forms.

For example, a man sees a beautiful woman and gives rise to greed and desire. Then he listens for her gentle voice. Once the eyes have seen the beautiful form, the ears want to follow and hear a beautiful sound. The nose wants a whiff of her powder and perfumes. If the eyes hadn't seen her, the ears wouldn't have been eager to hear her voice and the nose wouldn't have been enticed to smell the feminine fragrances. After that the tongue starts having ruinous false thoughts – maybe something like, "She's such a fine woman that I bet it wouldn't be bad to kiss her." In his heart this kind of ignorance arises. Then the body wants to come in contact with her and the mind relents. The mind is agreeable and goes along

with the rest. At that point he goes ahead and creates the karma of lust. The result in the future will be an evil retribution such as hugging the copper pillar or sleeping on the iron bed. Or the male and female organs are infested with iron-beaked creatures. How did it come about? It all started with the first offender – the seeing. Seeing by itself is just seeing; what he should not have done was to pursue what he saw. Rather:

When the eyes see forms,
inside there is nothing.

Do you have that kind of skill? If so, then it doesn't matter if you look every day. The more you see, the less you will be moved. But if you don't have that skill, then you had better be a little bit more careful. With a little more care, you won t have to hug the copper pillar or fall into some other hell.

The text says, "at the time of death." Everyone will die. There isn't anyone who can say he or she will live forever, unless one cultivates and becomes a sage or an immortal, in which case one can live if one wants and die if one wants. Or, if you are a Bodhisattva or an Arhat, you have freedom over birth and death. If you're not at that level, then you too will have a "time of death." When death comes for this offender, he will first see a "raging conflagration." That's because of his "fire of desire" – his sexual desire. And the conflagration is not limited to one place. To the ends of empty space and throughout the Dharma Realm – everywhere is ablaze. At that time **"the deceased one's spiritual consciousness takes flight, but then falls."** The "spiritual consciousness" refers to the eighth consciousness. It is also the soul, which has the potential to become a Buddha or a ghost. It is called the "intermediate skandha body," because at this stage the five skandhas have been severed from the former body and have not yet entered a new body. What happens to this offender's intermediate skandha body? It first flies up, but then falls. The spiritual consciousness has the power to fly through space, but in this case its spiritual penetrations are not very great, and so once it gets a

little way into space, it falls. **"Riding on a wisp of smoke, it enters the Unintermittent Hell,"** a place which is no playground. I think that even jet-setters would not want to take in those sights. So everybody should avoid planting the causes which lead to the hells. It would be infinitely better to go to the Buddha-fruition than to go to the hells. Don't follow this poor soul.

L2 Two fundamental appearances.

Sutra:

"There, it is aware of two appearances. One is a perception of brightness in which can be seen all sorts of evil things, and it gives rise to boundless fear. The other is a perception of darkness in which there is total stillness and no sight, and it experiences boundless terror.

Commentary:

The person who has committed karmic offenses by pursuing defiling objects of form falls into the Unintermittent Hell. "**There, it –** his intermediate skandha body **– is aware of two appearances. One is a perception of brightness in which can be seen all sorts of evil things."** With this perception of brightness, it can see absolutely everything. What is there to be seen? Evil things; every kind of terrible thing that you can possibly imagine. There are things like wolves and tigers and creatures with human bodies and ox heads or horse faces. The ghost of impermanence in his tall hat is also very much in evidence. There are also cruel and horrifying beasts. All he sees are these evil creatures, and so his skandha body **"gives rise to boundless fear."** One experiences tremendous terror. **"The other is a perception of darkness in which there is total stillness and no sight."** It can't see anything at all, because there is not the least bit of light from the sun or moon or from stars or lamps. "Total stillness and no sight" means there is not a creature, not a thing, not a sound, and no visual perception. But it is not a quieting experience; rather, **"it experiences boundless terror."** He experiences nothing but fear and terror. If he saw a beautiful woman then, I wonder if he'd be able to muster up any sexual

desire. The only way to know for sure would be to ask him. He has to undergo fear and terror in this hell because he created the karma of lust.

L3 A detailed explanation of the intermingled retributions.

Sutra:

“When the fire that comes from seeing burns the sense of hearing, it becomes cauldrons of boiling water and molten copper. When it burns the breath, it becomes black smoke and purple fumes. When it burns the sense of taste, it becomes scorching hot pellets and molten iron gruel. When it burns the sense of touch, it becomes white-hot embers and glowing coals. When it burns the mind, it becomes stars of fire that shower everywhere and whip up and inflame the entire realm of space.

Commentary:

Now the six interconnecting aspects are described. **“When the fire that comes from seeing burns the sense of hearing, it becomes cauldrons of boiling water and molten copper.”** When the fire reaches the ears and the hearing, it turns into the hell of cauldrons of boiling water and the hell of molten copper. The water is brought to a boil and the ghost is plunged into the pot. The “ghost” is just the spiritual consciousness of the deceased one. Do you remember what he did so that he now ends up in a pot of boiling water? His ears aided and abetted his seeing. When his eyes saw the beautiful form, his ears should have had sense enough to warn him not to listen to her voice. But instead his ears got right in there and enticed him to listen. He was all ears. And what he heard pleased him to no end. So now he’s in the cauldron of boiling water and molten copper. **“When it burns the breath, it becomes black smoke and purple fumes.”** When the fire reaches the nose, he has to breathe black smoke and purple soot. This happens because he got caught up in smelling nice fragrances. But I believe that the black smoke is not as much fun to inhale. In fact, the stench of it is appalling. But that is the retribution he must undergo.

"When it burns the sense of taste, it becomes scorching hot pellets and molten iron gruel." The "pellets" are little iron tablets, but when you put them in your mouth they burn your tongue to a crisp. He liked the "taste of women" – he liked to kiss them – and so now he gets hot iron gruel for breakfast every day. **"When it burns the sense of touch, it becomes white-hot embers and glowing coals."** When the fire from seeing burns through to the sense of touch, it becomes ashes, but the ashes aren't dead and cold; they still have fire in them.

"**When it burns the mind –** that is, dharmas-**it becomes stars of fire that shower everywhere and whip up and inflame the entire realm of space.**" The fire that scatters to burn you is as plentiful as the stars in the sky. It creates a wall of heat that builds up and fills all of empty space.

K2 Retribution of hearing.
L1 At the end of one's life one sees one's own fall.

Sutra:

"The second is the retribution of hearing, which beckons one and leads one to evil ends. The karma of hearing intermingles, and thus at the time of death one first sees gigantic waves that drown heaven and earth. The deceased one's spiritual consciousness falls into the water and rides the current into the Unintermittent Hell.

Commentary:

"**The second** of the six interconnected retributions **is the retribution of hearing.**" Originally, if one had returned the hearing to hear the self-nature, the hearing-nature could have accomplished the Unsurpassed Way. Instead, the person in question turned all his attention outside and listened to defiling sounds. He listened to sounds that gave him enjoyment. Perhaps he liked to listen to women sing. Perhaps he enjoyed listening to women talk. The same applies for men as for women. Women like to listen to men. It's not a one-way street. The Sutra is talking about both sexes. You shouldn't think that if the Sutra uses the masculine form, it just

means that men are bad, while women are not included. The offenses the two sexes commit are the same. They are those **"which beckons one and leads one to evil ends."**

This person's retribution beckons him just as if it were calling to him, "Come here! Come here!" in very persuasive tones. It entices him. **"The karma of hearing intermingles, and thus at the time of death one first sees gigantic waves that drown heaven and earth…"** The "intermingling" refers to the way in which the six organs are interconnected in their retribution. The ear gets involved with all the other five sense organs. The ghost – the inter-mediate skandha body – sees the entire universe filled up with billowing waves; but is it really that way? No. It is a manifestation which appears because of his karmic retribution. The same is true when we people see mountains, rivers, the earth, vegetation, buildings, San Francisco, New York, Japan, China, and everything else – it's all a manifestation due to the power of our karma. Without that power of karma, it is all empty space. If your karma is ended and your emotion is empty, then everything throughout the Dharma Realm is void. It is all emptiness. There isn't anything at all. But because of attachment to appearances, you see all kinds of colors, shapes, and forms.

This ghost sees the entirety of heaven and earth as submerged in a vast expanse of billowing waves. **"The deceased one's spiritual consciousness falls into the water and rides the current into the Unintermittent Hell."** He flows along with the stream and ends up at his brother's house. Where's that? The Unintermittent Hell. Who's his brother? His seeing. The six brothers race right after one another.

L2 Two fundamental appearances.

Sutra:

"There, it is aware of two sensations. One is open hearing, in which it hears all sorts of noise and its essential spirit becomes confused. The other is closed hearing, in which there is total stillness and no hearing, and its soul sinks into oblivion.

Commentary:

Such a graphic and sobering explanation, and yet people still willingly go ahead and create offenses. You talk about how fine it is to become a Buddha, but people aren't interested in becoming Buddhas. You tell about the horrors of the hells, and they decide to try them out. Becoming a Buddha is so fine, but they don't even give it a try. "We'll talk about it later," they procrastinate. They've been told that listening to defiling sounds creates karmic offenses, but as soon as they find themselves in such a situation they are compelled to listen. They think, "I hear about that in the Sutra, but I'm not convinced it's right." So they try it out.

"**There,** when the intermediate skandha body gets to the Unintermittent Hell, **it is aware of two sensations. One is open hearing, in which it hears all sorts of noise and its essential spirit becomes confused.**" All pandemonium breaks loose. "Confused" means that it cannot remember anything any more. **"The other is closed hearing, in which there is total stillness and no hearing, and its soul sinks into oblivion."** It experiences total deafness. Then its soul goes one knows not where. It sinks into oblivion.

L3 A detailed explanation of the intermingled retributions.

Sutra:

"When the waves from hearing flow into the hearing, they become scolding and interrogation. When they flow into the seeing, they become thunder and roaring and evil poisonous vapors. When they flow into the breath, they become rain and fog that is permeated with poisonous organisms that entirely fill up the body. When they flow into the sense of taste, they become pus and blood and every kind of filth. When they flow into the sense of touch, they become animals and ghosts, and excrement and urine. When they flow into the mind, they become lightning and hail which ravage the heart and soul.

Commentary:

"**When the waves from hearing flow into the hearing –** the organ of the ear **– they become scolding and interrogation. When they flow into the seeing, they become thunder and roaring and evil poisonous vapors.** There is a hell of thunder and roaring. One is saturated in poisonous vapors. **"When they flow into the breath, they become rain and fog that is permeated with poisonous organisms that entirely fill up the body."** There's a hell where there's eternal rain and fog. The rain is polluted with poisonous organisms, and when they strike the skin, they bite into every pore and work their way in. Pretty soon one's whole body is covered with poisonous organisms. **"When they flow into the sense of taste, they become pus and blood and every kind of filth."** It is utter muck and scum. **"When they flow into the sense of touch, they become animals and ghosts, and excrement and urine."** He undergoes his punishment in the hell of excrement and urine. **"When they flow into the mind, they become lightning and hail which ravage the heart and soul."** In the Hell of Lightning and Hail, there is an eternal storm, and one is struck by lightning and hailstones. It's a painful retribution. The ghost's very heart and soul are ripped to smithereens.

K3 Retribution of smelling.
L1 At the end of one's life one sees one's own fall.

Sutra:

"The third is the retribution of smelling, which beckons one and leads one to evil ends. The karma of smelling intermingles, and thus at the time of death one first sees a poisonous smoke that permeates the atmosphere near and far. The deceased one's spiritual consciousness wells up out of the earth and enters the Unintermittent Hell.

Commentary:

"The nose doesn't do anything but smell," you protest. "What karma can it create?" However, smelling can also create karma. That's because there is greed involved in the smelling. Because of

its greed for fragrances, the nose sometimes ends up doing improper things, like pursuing the fragrances of women. With this kind of deviant view, all kinds of evil karma can be created. Then there are various kinds of interconnected evil retributions which must be borne. Therefore, **"The third is the retribution of smelling, which beckons one and leads one to evil ends. The karma of smelling intermingles, and thus at the time of death one first sees a poisonous smoke that permeates the atmosphere near and far."** When the person was alive he liked to smell fragrances, but now everything has turned into a poisonous vapor. You should realize that the fragrant things of this world, when inhaled to the ultimate, become poisonous vapors. **"The deceased one's spiritual consciousness wells up out of the earth and enters the Unintermittent Hell."** When it sees that everything is permeated with poison, it tries to leap out of it – to bound up above the earth and escape it. Little does it realize that with that single bound it will end up in the Unintermittent Hell.

L2 The fundamental appearances.

Sutra:

"There, it is aware of two sensations. One is unobstructed smelling, in which it is thoroughly infused with the evil vapors and its mind becomes distressed. The other is obstructed smelling, in which its breath is cut off and there is no passage, and it lies stifled and suffocating on the ground.

Commentary:

"**There, it –** the intermediate skandha body **– is aware of two sensations. One is unobstructed smelling, in which it is thoroughly infused with the evil vapors and its mind becomes distressed.**" His mind is in total chaos and turmoil. **"The other is obstructed smelling, in which its breath is cut off and there is no passage."** He can't breathe. **"It lies stifled and suffocating on the ground."** He's in total despair and on the verge of death.

L3 A detailed explanation of the intermingled retributions.

Sutra:

"When the vapor of smelling invades the breath, it becomes cross-examination and bearing witness. When it invades the seeing, it becomes fire and torches. When it invades the hearing, it becomes sinking and drowning, oceans, and bubbling cauldrons. When it invades the sense of taste, it becomes putrid or rancid foods. When it invades the sense of touch, it becomes ripping apart and beating to a pulp. It also becomes a huge mountain of flesh which has a hundred thousand eyes and which is sucked and fed upon by numberless worms. When it invades the mind, it becomes ashes, pestilent airs, and flying sand and gravel which cut the body to ribbons.

Commentary:

"When the vapor of smelling invades the breath, it becomes cross-examination and bearing witness." One undergoes constant questioning. Or one is obligated to do certain things. **"When it invades the seeing, it becomes fire and torches."** This is the Hell of Fire and Torches. **"When it invades the hearing, it becomes sinking and drowning.**" There is a hell of sinking and drowning which contains blood and urine. Or it becomes **"oceans, and bubbling cauldrons."** These are other hells. **"When it invades the sense of taste, it becomes putrid or rancid foods."** "Putrid" describes rotten fish-flesh. "Rancid" describes spoiled candy. In general it means having to eat food that's gone bad. **"When it invades the sense of touch, it becomes ripping apart and beating to a pulp. It also becomes a huge mountain of flesh which has a hundred thousand eyes and which is sucked and fed upon by numberless worms."** They devour one's flesh and blood. **"When it invades the mind, it becomes ashes, pestilent airs, and flying sand and gravel which cut the body to ribbons."** When the vapors of the smelling invade the mind, one is saturated with foul air – with ashes and vapors carrying disease-ridden

organisms. Or stones and clods of earth come hurtling at one unexpectedly and totally riddle one's body.

K4 Retribution of tasting.
L1 At the end of one's life one sees one's own fall.

Sutra:

"The fourth is the retribution of tasting, which beckons one and leads one to evil ends. This karma of tasting intermingles, and thus at the time of death one first sees an iron net ablaze with a raging fire that covers over the entire world. The deceased one's spiritual consciousness passes down through this hanging net, and suspended upside down it enters the Unintermittent Hell.

Commentary:

When people nourish their own bodies with animal flesh, they become greedy for meat and investigate flavors. They are always investigating ways to come up with new and different combinations to make superb delicacies. Because of this, they end up creating a lot of bad karma. How do they make bad karma? In the study of flavors, Chinese people have decided that the most nourishment lies in living flesh. They have taken to eating live creatures – the "freshest" meat. Westerners put their meat in refrigerators for a while before they eat it. But Chinese people feel that cooling the meat robs it of its nutrients. They prefer to cut the flesh off living animals and eat that. For instance, there's one technique in which the cook sets a hog to running and forces it to run for a couple of hours by beating it. Eventually its heart is racing, and its circulation increases to the point that its flesh swells. At the strategic moment the cook slices off a big piece of flesh from the pig's hindquarters and roasts it. This is considered to be the tastiest meat.

The Chinese have another ingenious method: first they cut a hole in the center of the table and stick the monkey's head up through the hole – the monkey is still alive at this point. Then they smash the skull with a club and the people sit around and eat the monkey's brains. They say this is a most nutritious food. These are

examples of creating karmic offenses because of the sense of taste. Because of a greed for fine flavors, people will go to all kinds of extremes and invent various strange methods of creating karmic offenses.

"The fourth is the retribution of tasting, which beckons one and leads one to evil ends. This karma of tasting intermingles, and thus at the time of death one first sees an iron net ablaze with a raging fire that covers over the entire world." The karma of tasting intermingles with the experiences of the other five sense organs. When the person is about to die, he sees a conflagration in an iron net that extends over the whole world. **"The deceased one's spiritual consciousness passes down through this hanging net, and suspended upside down it enters the Unintermittent Hell."** His soul falls and gets hung up in the net. Head-first, upside down, he enters the unspaced hell.

L2 Two fundamental appearances.

Sutra:

"There, it is aware of two sensations. One is a sucking air which congeals into ice so that it freezes the flesh of his body. The other is a spitting blast of air which spews out a raging fire that roasts his bones and marrow to a pulp.

Commentary:

"There, it is aware of two sensations. One is a sucking air which congeals into ice so that it freezes the flesh of his body." The sucking is an intake of breath, and it is cold. It becomes ice – bitter cold. It freezes the flesh of the body. **"The other is a spitting blast of air which spews out a raging fire that roasts his bones and marrow to a pulp."** This is the exhalation. It's a spitting fire which burns up his bones and marrow.

L3 A detailed explanation of the intermingled retributions.

Sutra:

"When the tasting of flavors passes through the sense of taste, it becomes what must be acknowledged and what must be endured. When it passes through the seeing, it becomes burning metal and stones. When it passes through the hearing, it becomes sharp weapons and knives. When it passes through the sense of smell, it becomes a vast iron cage that encloses the entire land. When it passes through the sense of touch, it becomes bows and arrows, crossbows, and darts. When it passes through the mind, it becomes flying pieces of molten iron that rain down from out of space.

Commentary:

"When the tasting of flavors and the evil karma it creates **passes through the sense of taste, it becomes what must be acknowledged and what must be endured."** "What must be acknowledged" means that, however unwilling, you are forced to admit to the evil karma you have created. "What must be endured" means that you must undergo what is basically unendurable. You can't evade your responsibility. **"When it passes through the seeing, it becomes burning metal and stones."** There's a hell where the fire gets so hot that it melts the metal and rocks. **"When it passes through the hearing, it becomes sharp weapons and knives."** In this hell a lot of keen weapons pierce your body. **"When it passes through the sense of smell, it becomes a vast iron cage that encloses the entire land."** It extends over an area as large as an entire country. **"When it passes through the sense of touch, it becomes bows and arrows, crossbows, and darts."** Arrows and darts pierce the offender's body. **"When it passes through the mind, it becomes flying pieces of molten iron that rain down from out of space."** These red-hot bits of metal fall out of the sky and burn the body.

K5 Retribution of touching.
L1 At the end of one's life one sees one's own fall.

Sutra:

"The fifth is the retribution of touching, which beckons one and leads one to evil ends. The karma of touching intermingles, and thus at the time of death one first sees huge mountains closing in on one from four sides, leaving no path of escape. The deceased one's spiritual consciousness then sees a vast iron city. Fiery snakes and fiery dogs, wolves, lions, ox-headed jail keepers, and horse-headed rakshasas brandishing spears and lances drive it into the iron city toward the Unintermittent Hell.

Commentary:

"The fifth is the retribution of touching, which beckons one and leads one to evil ends." If one is greedy for objects of touch, one gets drawn into an evil retribution. **"The karma of touching intermingles, and thus at the time of death one first sees huge mountains closing in on one from four sides, leaving no path of escape."** The karma created from the sensation of touch combines with the karma of the other five sense organs. A person with this kind of karma will experience the karmic response of seeing gigantic mountains surrounding him and pushing in on him to crush him. There is no way for him to escape the position he's in. No road is open to him. **"The deceased one's spiritual consciousness then sees a vast iron city."** At that point, when he's caught in the midst of these mountains that are moving in on him, he spies a big iron city. **"Fiery snakes and fiery dogs, wolves, lions, ox-headed jail keepers, and horse-headed rakshasas brandishing spears and lances drive it into the iron city toward the Unintermittent Hell."** These beasts are alive, but they are composed of fire. The ox-headed jail keepers are responsible for looking after the iron city. The horse-headed rakshasa ghosts and the jailers are heavily armed with various sorts of spears and other terrifying weapons. This vicious entourage compels the offender to enter the vast iron

city. As soon as he gets inside the city, he falls into the Unintermittent Hells.

L2 Two fundamental appearances.

Sutra:

"There, it is aware of two sensations. One is touch that involves coming together, in which mountains come together to squeeze its body until its flesh, bones, and blood are totally dispersed. The other is touch that involves separation, in which knives and swords attack the body, ripping the heart and liver to shreds.

Commentary:

"There, it is aware of two sensations. One is touch that involves coming together, in which mountains come together to squeeze its body until its flesh, bones, and blood are totally dispersed." From four sides, huge mountains close in to press one's body. Every part of the body is smashed to smithereens. The mountains squeeze one into a meat patty. At that point one dies, of course, but then the "clever wind" revives one. Replete with a new body, one has to go through the same experience again. In this way one gets squeezed to death and revived, again and again, birth after birth and death after death. This is touch that involves contact.

"The other is touch that involves separation, in which knives and swords attack the body, ripping the heart and liver to shreds." Knives, swords, lances and the like assault the body, and the internal organs are completely destroyed.

L3 A detailed explanation of the intermingled retributions.

Sutra:

"When this touching passes through the sensation of touch, it becomes striking, binding, stabbing, and piercing. When it passes through the seeing, it becomes burning and scorching. When it passes through the hearing, it becomes questioning, investigating, court examinations, and interrogation. When it

passes through the sense of smell, it becomes enclosures, bags, beating, and binding up. When it passes through the sense of taste, it becomes plowing, pinching, chopping, and severing. When it passes through the mind, it becomes falling, flying, frying, and broiling.

Commentary:

"When this touching passes through the sensation of touch, it becomes striking, binding, stabbing, and piercing." The text actually reads "questioning, investigating, court examinations, and interrogation" but these are more appropriate to the retribution for hearing, whereas "striking, binding, stabbing, and piercing," which appear in the text under hearing, are more appropriate to the sense of touch. "Striking" occurs when two things are hit together, "binding" is being tied up. "Stabbing" is being cut by knives, and "piercing" is what happens when arrows are shot at one. **"When it passes through the seeing, it becomes burning and scorching."** When the sense of touch is influenced by seeing, then the retribution is burning and intense heat, like the hell of fiery soup and charcoals and the like. **"When it passes through the hearing, it becomes questioning, investigating, court examinations, and interrogation."** "Questioning" means being brought before the courts of hell. "Investigating" means being examined by officials before passing through the gates. "Court examinations" are designed to cross-examine you about the offenses you have created. **"When it passes through the sense of smell, it becomes enclosures, bags, beating, and binding up."** "Enclosures" means one is put inside something and contained. "Bags" refers to being tied in a bag. "Beating" means that besides being contained, you are beaten up. "Binding" up means that you are tied down and restricted. **"When it passes through the sense of taste, it becomes plowing, pinching, chopping, and severing."** "Plowing" refers to having one's tongue plowed through. First it is hooked and pulled out, and then it is plowed through. "Pinching" means that the tongue is seized with pincers and pulled out. "Cutting" refers to having the tongue cut through. "Severing" means chopping the

tongue clear off. **"When it passes through the mind, it becomes falling, flying, frying, and broiling."** "Falling" is when one is tossed into space and left to drop as one will. "Flying" also refers to being hurtled into space and then allowed to crash down to earth. "Frying" means the application of intense heat to burn one to a crisp, as if one were an oil cake. "Broiling" is another way one's body is burned.

K6 Retribution of thinking.
L1 At the end of one's life one sees one's own fall.

Sutra:

"The sixth is the retribution of thinking, which beckons one and leads one to evil ends. The karma of thinking intermingles, and thus at the time of death one first sees a foul wind which devastates the land. The deceased one's spiritual consciousness is blown up into space, and then, spiraling downward, it rides that wind straight into the Unintermittent Hell.

Commentary:

"The sixth is the retribution of thinking, which beckons one and leads one to evil ends." The bad retribution which thinking can create is extremely severe, and the evil karma it calls up is enormous. **"The karma of thinking intermingles, and thus at the time of death one first sees a foul wind which devastates the land."** The karma of thinking intermingles with the karma of the other sense organs. It accumulates so that at the time of death all one sees is a horrendous wind which is blowing everything in the world to bits. **"The deceased one's spiritual consciousness is blown up into space, and then, spiraling downward, it rides that wind straight into the Unintermittent Hell."** The dead person's soul is blown up into empty space, but then it takes a dive and spins into the unspaced hell.

L2 Two fundamental appearances.

Sutra:

"There, it is aware of two sensations. One is extreme confusion, which causes it to be frantic and to race about ceaselessly. The other is not confusion, but rather an acute awareness which causes it to suffer from endless roasting and burning, the extreme pain of which is difficult to bear.

Commentary:

"There, it is aware of two sensations. One is extreme confusion, which causes it to be frantic and to race about ceaselessly." The first is a lack of awareness. One doesn't understand anything at all at that time. One is sunk into a stupor, like an idiot. In that deep confusion, one becomes incoherent and races about senselessly. One never stops to rest. Wouldn't you say that is a lot of suffering? **"The other is not confusion, but rather an acute awareness which causes it to suffer from endless roasting and burning, the extreme pain of which is difficult to bear."** The other alternative is not to be confused, but to be clearly aware of what is going on. But this awareness allows one to experience intense suffering. Although one is not confused, everything one experiences is suffering. The suffering comes from the raging blaze that burns one. The pain is the worst one could know. It's like when our bodies itch; pretty soon we can't bear the itch, so we have to scratch. It's that way here, but what is felt is pain – ultimately intense and ceaseless pain.

L3 A detailed explanation of the intermingled retributions.

Sutra:

"When this deviant thought combines with thinking, it becomes locations and places. When it combines with seeing, it becomes inspection and testimonies. When it combines with hearing, it becomes huge crushing rocks, ice and frost, dirt and fog. When it combines with smelling, it becomes a great fiery car, a fiery boat, and a fiery jail. When it combines with tasting,

it becomes loud calling, wailing, and regretful crying. When it combines with touch, it becomes sensations of large and small, where ten thousand births and ten thousands deaths are endured every day, and of lying with one's face to the ground.

Commentary:

"When this deviant thought combines with thinking, it becomes locations and places." "Deviant thought" means that the things one thinks about are improper, and one indulges in fantasies – that is, one's thoughts dwell on strange and weird things. When the deviant thought receives a retribution directed at itself, it turns into evil places of inquisition and interrogation. **"When it combines with seeing, it becomes inspection and testimonies."** "Inspection" refers to the offense-spotting mirror in the hells. When you arrive, you have to go before the mirror and watch all the offenses you created in your life appear there, just as if they were frames of a movie. They are all in vivid detail, and there's no way you can back out of them. You can't avoid owning up to them. If you refuse to admit them, you have to endure "testimonies," in which people prove what you did. **"When it combines with hearing, it becomes huge crushing rocks."** They close in on the four sides surrounding you and crush you between them. And it's cold with **ice and frost,** and there is **dirt and fog.** This hell is polluted – a yellow haze defiles the atmosphere so that you can't see anything and you get dizzy and disoriented.

"When it combines with smelling, it becomes a great fiery car." This does not refer to trains that take us on vacations here in the world, but rather to a car red-hot with fire that one is forced to sit in. A **"fiery boat"** means that the entire boat is ablaze and you must climb aboard. **"A fiery fail"** is a prison full of fire that you must enter. **"When it combines with tasting, it becomes loud calling, wailing, and regretful crying."** The noise in this hell is tremendous. One experiences regret in this hell and one moans and weeps.

“**When it combines with touch, it becomes sensations of large and small –** big hells and little hells **– where ten thousand births and ten thousands deaths are endured every day.**” In the course of one single day, one dies a myriad times and is born a myriad times. “And it becomes **lying with one’s face to the ground.**” Whether lying down, crawling, or standing up, one undergoes punishment. In general, this is not a pleasant place to be. It’s not a likely spot to want to go, for the pain and suffering is tremendous.

I4 General conclusion: they are empty and false.
J1 Concludes that they are falsely created.

Sutra:

“Ananda, these are called the ten causes and six retributions of the hells, which are all created by the confusion and falseness of living beings.

Commentary:

“Ananda, these are called the ten causes and six retributions of the hells.” Many different hells have just been named, and all come from the ten habitual causes, which are these:

1. lust
2. greed
3. arrogance
4. hatred
5. deception
6. lying
7. animosity
8. views
9. injustice
10. litigation

They result in the six intermingling retributions that involve the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind as they react to forms, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas. These hells

"are all created by the confusion and falseness of living beings." They come from giving rise to falseness within the one truth, Once ignorance arises, various karmic manifestations result from it. From the karma, various offenses are created. But if one returns the hearing to hear the self-nature and cultivates this path to enlightenment, then all this karma becomes empty. It disappears.

J2 Distinguishes the comparative weight of the offenses.

Sutra:

"If living beings create this evil karma simultaneously, they enter the Avici Hell and endure limitless suffering, passing through limitless kalpas.

Commentary:

"If living beings create this evil karma simultaneously, they enter the Avici Hell." If they indulge in behavior that includes all ten causes and all six intermingling retributions, they go to the Avici Hell. It is an Unintermittent Hell, but it is the most severe one, so here it is named specifically. Basically all the Unintermittent Hells can be called Avici, but here the most severe one is specifically given that name. In that hell, they **"endure limitless suffering, passing through limitless kalpas."**

Sutra:

"If each of the six sense organs creates them and if what is done includes each state and each sense organ, then the person will enter the Eight Unintermittent Hells.

Commentary:

"If each of the six sense organs creates them": if the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind each create these offenses – the ten habitual causes – but not all at the same time as in the previous passage, **"and if what is done includes each state and each sense organ, then the person will enter the Eight Unintermittent Hells."** What's done means what the sense organs do in reaction to the states of the sense objects – the kind of karma they create.

"Each state" refers to the sense objects and "each sense organ" to the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind individually. "What is done" is the offenses which are created from the habitual causes. Here, all the sense organs create all the habitual causes, but they do not do it simultaneously. A person who follows his six sense organs and six sense objects to create such offenses will undergo the retributions of the eight Unintermittent Hells. There are eight hot and eight cold hells, and this refers to the eight cold hells.

Sutra:

"If the three karmas of body, mouth, and mind commit acts of killing, stealing, and lust, the person will enter the eighteen hells.

Commentary:

"If the three karmas of body, mouth, and mind commit acts of killing, stealing, and lust" – there are three evils of the body.

1. killing
2. stealing
3. lust

There are four evils of the mouth.

1. loose speech
2. false speech
3. harsh speech
4. backbiting

There are three evils of the mind.

1. greed
2. hatred
3. stupidity

If the karmas of the body, mouth, and mind are not pure, then one creates these ten evils. **"The person will enter the eighteen hells."** There are terrible punishments in these eighteen consecutive hells.

Sutra:

"If the three karmas are not all involved, and there is perhaps just one act of killing and/or of stealing, then the person must enter the Thirty-six Hells.

Commentary:

In the situation described above, the karma created was heavy. Now, the three karmas are not all involved in making offenses. **"If the three karmas are not all involved, and there is perhaps just one act of killing and/or of stealing"**: maybe the person commits one murder or one theft, or he commits murder and a theft, or he commits a murder and an act of lust or a theft. In short, he doesn't do them all, but some partial combination of them. The offense-karma of a person in that situation is a bit lighter. **"Then the person must enter the Thirty-six Hells."** Although he has to undergo more hells, the offenses are lighter and the suffering in these hells is not as severe.

Sutra:

"If the sense organ of sight alone commits just one karmic offense, then the person must enter the one hundred and eight hells.

Commentary:

"If the sense organ of sight" is the source of all offenses. It is said:

If the eyes didn't see it, the mouth
would not be gluttonous for it.
If the ears didn't hear it, the mind
would not make transgressions concerning it.

If you didn't see something good to eat, your mouth would not commit the offense of gluttony. If the ears did not hear lovely sounds, the mind would not give rise to thoughts of desire. Seeing them is the beginning of evil and the source of offenses. Therefore, the text says, "**If the sense organ of sight alone commits just one**

karmic offense” **–** perhaps it commits only one of the three karmas of the body: killing, or stealing, or lust. **“Then the person must enter the one hundred and eight hells.”**

J3 Even the heavy offenses are clearly an arisal of falseness.

Sutra:

“Because of this, living beings who do certain things create certain karma, and so in the world they enter collective hells, which arise from false thinking and which originally are not there at all.

Commentary:

“**Because of this,** because of the various circumstances described above, **living beings who do certain things create certain karma.**” They do individual things, they create their own special offenses, and then they have to undergo a retribution. **“And so in the world they enter collective hells.”** All the people who create a particular kind of karma enter that collective hell. Each category of offense has its retribution, and all who create that offense collectively undergo the retribution in the hells, **“which arise from false thinking and which originally are not there at all.”** These hells arise from offenses. Offenses are created because of ignorance. They arise from false thinking. Originally, though, they don’t exist at all. Originally there is purity and no defilement – there isn’t anything at all. But,

Just because you make one false move,
You blow the whole chess game.

As it is said:

If one is off by a hair in the beginning,
One will miss it by a thousand miles.

Destiny of Ghosts

H2 Destiny of ghosts.
I1 Concludes prior discussion and begins this.

Sutra:

"And then, Ananda, after the living beings who have slandered and destroyed rules and deportment, violated the Bodhisattva precepts, slandered the Buddha's Nirvana, and created various other kinds of karma, pass through many kalpas of being burned in the inferno, they finally finish paying for their offenses and are reborn as ghosts.

Commentary:

Since the explanation of the ten habitual causes and the six intermingling retributions is not yet finished, Shakyamuni Buddha says, "**And then, Ananda,** let me tell you some more about this principle. "**After the living beings** who have created karmic offenses, **who have slandered and destroyed rules and deportment**" **–** they said things like, "Those precepts and rules in your Buddhism are not necessary. People should be free to do as they please, especially in America. This is a democratic country, and everyone is free and independent. So there shouldn't be prohibitions in Buddhism, either." They denounce the idea of the Buddha's precepts. They say that one can be a left-home person, a member of the Sangha, whether one has taken precepts or not. They

claim that the precepts and rules are unnecessary and that there is no need to abide by the three thousand modes of deportment and the eighty thousand subtle aspects of conduct. They **"violated the Bodhisattva precepts."** They don't uphold the Ten Major and Forty-eight Minor Bodhisattva Precepts. They violate them. They **"slandered the Buddha's Nirvana."** They say that the principle of Nirvana is also incorrect. These kinds of people are steeped in offenses. They have **"and created various other kinds of karma"** as well – a lot of bad karma. After creating offenses such as these, they "**pass through many kalpas –** a tremendously long time **– of being burned in the inferno** before **they finally finish paying for their offenses.**" Eventually their offenses are gone and they no longer have to dwell in the hells undergoing bitter retributions. When their offenses are paid back, they **"are reborn as ghosts."** True enough, they've finished being punished for their offenses, but then they get reborn as ghosts.

People who call themselves disciples of the Buddha and yet don't believe in ghosts should pay attention to the mention of ghosts in the *Shurangama Sutra*. There are many kinds of ghosts, not just one kind. In fact, I'll tell you something: the Shurangama Mantra for the most part consists of the names of ghosts. **"La She Pwo Ye, Ju La Bwo Ye"** are names of ghosts. The reason we recite the mantra is to call out the names of the Ghost Kings. When we recite names of the big ghosts, all the lesser ones don't dare make trouble, either. Mantras are the names of ghosts and spirits.

The beings discussed here are reborn as ghosts. What kind of ghosts? Ten kinds of ghosts are now discussed in connection with the karma created from the ten habitual causes. But, in fact, there are many kinds of ghosts, not just ten. These are just representative.

J1 Strange ghosts result from the habit of greed and take form when they encounter material objects.

Sutra:

"If greed for material objects was the original cause that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished

paying for his crimes, he takes shape when he encounters material objects, and he is called a strange ghost.

Commentary:

“**If greed for material objects was the original cause** on his causal ground **that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he takes shape when he encounters material objects.**” What kind of objects was he greedy for? The greatest desire is the desire for sex. If he sought such things when he was on the causal ground, and if he committed crimes while doing so, then he has to fall into the hells. After his term in hell is finished, he takes shape when he encounters material objects. What kind of objects? Any kind; whatever kind it is, he can attach himself to it and take his form from it. He’s **“called a strange ghost.”**

J2 Drought ghosts result from the habit of lust and take form when they encounter wind.

Sutra:

“If it was greed for lust that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he takes shape when he encounters the wind, and he is called a drought-ghost.

Commentary:

“If it was greed for lust that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he takes shape when he encounters the wind.” In China, someone who is lustful is said to be greedy for “the wind and the current.” People who are like this end up as drought-ghosts. What are drought-ghosts like? Wherever they go, it doesn’t rain, and this is due to the “tricks of desert and of drought-ghosts.” If you encounter a place where the rain does not fall, where the sprouts in the fields dry up and die, you know now that such a place is inhabited by a drought-ghost. This is true: By listening to the *Shurangama Sutra*, you can unravel all the mysteries of the world. All the questions of

physical science are clarified in this Sutra. If you hadn't heard this Sutra, you wouldn't understand the reason behind droughts and deserts. Basically, these are due to the tricks of the drought-ghost.

This kind of person was greedy for "the wind and the current," and so now when his ghost encounters the wind it takes its shape and **"is called a drought-ghost."** He causes drought wherever he goes. Pretty talented, huh?

J3 Mei ghosts result from the habit of lying and take form when they encounter animals.

Sutra:

"If it was greed to lie that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he takes shape when he encounters an animal, and he is called a mei ghost.

Commentary:

This kind of ghost takes its shape when it encounters an animal – perhaps a fox spirit or a yellow wolf, or even a cat or a dog. It's possible for animals to have these weird essences attached to them. I've seen a cat that was possessed by a ghost. It could perform some great stunts. It could jump more than ten feet in the air and land on the top of the house. Then it would leap off the house and land on the ground; it would go through this routine over and over. It also howled and wailed. A fox that is possessed in this way can in turn possess a person. Although it's an animal, it can send out its soul and enter a person, and talk through him or her. A yellow wolf can also do this. It sends out its efficacious spirit and possesses someone. Then it can speak through the person it has possessed. There are a lot of these strange manifestations. This is called the mei ghost. When it possesses a person, the person's mind becomes totally confused by it, and he loses his sense of awareness. It's as if he were asleep.

J4 Poisonous ghosts result from the habit of hatred and take form when they encounter worms.

Sutra:

"If it was greed for hatred that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he takes shape when he encounters worms, and he is called a ku poison ghost.

Commentary:

"If it was greed for hatred that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he takes shape when he encounters worms." All ten of these ghosts are described by means of their greed. Ultimately, it is greed that creates their forms as ghosts. This one was greedy for hatred. Full of hatred, he would attack people without reason, and so he committed offense-karma involving hatred. That caused him to fall into the Unintermittent Hell. When he finishes working out his punishments in the hells, he becomes a ghost, and he takes shape when he encounters worms. **"He is called a ku poison ghost."** This *ku* poison is found in Canton Province in China. People use it to put hexes on other people. They take the *ku* poison from these worms and make it into a medicine. If they slip a pill of this medicine into your tea, then ever after that you must obey their every instruction. If you don't, you'll die. That's to contract *ku* poisoning. In the Southeast Asian countries like Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and so forth, *ku* poisoning is common. There is a ghost behind this kind of poisoning – it is his specialty. His potions are extremely potent.

The only way to undo such a hex is for the person who put it on you to recite a mantra designed to release you from it. But if he won't do that, then you're in real trouble. You are forever in his control. One amusing use of it is by the southern women who hex the northern men from Canton Province whom they take a fancy to. After they marry, the wife puts a hex on her northern husband so that if he ever gets the idea in his head to leave her, he will die. So those northern men are very faithful to their southern wives. A lot

of people have this trick played on them. But you should be clear that this is a deviant trick.

J5 Pestilence ghosts result from the habit of resentment and take form when they encounter degeneration.

Sutra:

"If it was greed for animosity that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he takes shape when he encounters degeneration, and he is called a pestilence ghost.

Commentary:

"If it was greed for animosity that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he takes shape when he encounters degeneration." "Animosity" means that he's always thinking about things that happened in the past and remembering them with resentment. Because he's always wanting to get even, he commits offenses. From these crimes, he is forced to fall into the Unintermittent Hells. After the offenses are paid for and disappear, the criminal is free. But his freedom is such that when he encounters degeneration he takes shape. It may be a debilitated person or any kind of animal that is feeble and old. He borrows the physical forms of such beings and becomes **"a pestilence ghost."** Sometimes, rather than taking over a person who is debilitated, he possesses a person who then becomes debilitated. This kind of ghost is terrible and fierce. It can wipe out a human life as easily as it can pull something out of its pocket.

J6 Hungry ghosts result from the habit of arrogance and take form when they encounter gases.

Sutra:

"If it was greed to be arrogant that made the person commit offenses, then after he has finished paying for his crimes, he takes shape when he encounters gases, and he is called a hungry ghost.

Commentary:

"If it was greed to be arrogant that made the person commit offenses, then after he has finished paying for his crimes, he takes shape when he encounters gases." He was a really haughty individual. Therefore, people should not look down on others. People should not be haughty and self-satisfied, or be totally lacking in courtesy toward others. A person like this doesn't even acknowledge others when he encounters them – he's downright rude.

During the Three Kingdoms Period in China, there was a pedant named Tse Ts'e who went to see General Ts'ao Ts'ao. Ts'ao Ts'ao prepared everyone in advance of the visit, saying that when the pedant walked in, no one should look at him. When the pedant arrived for his appointment with Ts'ao Ts'ao, none of the several dozen attendants who surrounded the General stood up. It was just as if they hadn't even noticed that he had come in. So what do you suppose Tse Ts'e did? He started to cry. Ts'ao Ts'ao asked, "What are you crying about?"

He replied, "How could you expect me not to weep when I encounter a whole group of dead people? They are all dead, aren't they? That's why they can't speak or move, isn't it?"

After that scolding, Ts'ao Ts'ao was at a loss. This happened at the time when Ts'ao Ts'ao was in his greatest days of power. That's why he was rude to Tse T'se. And what he displayed was the kind of arrogance being discussed here.

A person who is arrogant will commit offenses, and after his term in the unspaced hells, he will take shape when he encounters gases. The kind of gas doesn't matter – any kind will do for him to use to make his appearance. This kind of ghost **"is called a hungry ghost."** "Hungry ghosts" are just what their name implies – ghosts that don't have anything to eat. Their necks are as skinny as needles, and their bellies are as big as barrels. Since their throats are so thin, they can't swallow any food. If you were to see such a ghost, wouldn't you consider it to be ugly?

J7 Paralysis ghosts result from the habit of injustice and form when they encounter darkness.

Sutra:

"If it was greed to be unjust to others that made the person commit offenses, then after he has finished paying for his crimes, he takes shape when he encounters darkness, and he is called a paralysis ghost.

Commentary:

"If it was greed to be unjust to others – to hurt other people – **that made the person commit offenses, then after he has finished paying for his crimes, he takes shape when he encounters darkness."** Being greedy to oppress and prone to being unfair, one creates offenses. These offenses will cause one to fall into the unspaced hells. After hundreds of thousands of millions of kalpas, one's karmic offenses are wiped away and one is free to go, but one's left-over habits still remain and have not been changed, and so one is still unjust and greedy to oppress others. The habits persist. So he takes his form when he encounters darkness. He appears in dingy, shadowy places, **and he is called a paralysis ghost.**" Do you remember the kumbhanda ghost that was discussed before? This is he. One of my disciples tells me that he has met this type of ghost dozens of times. He fought them off each time and didn't lose his life, however.

It's dangerous business to get mixed up with them, though, because it's possible for a paralysis ghost to kill you with his techniques. But now that this disciple believes in the Buddha, I believe that this type of ghost won't have the audacity to bother him anymore.

J8 Wang-liang ghosts result from the habit of views and take form when they encounter essential energy.

Sutra:

"If it was greed for views that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he

takes shape when he encounters essential energy, and he is called a wang-liang ghost.

Commentary:

"Views" refers to opinions – to one's own viewpoint. With the habit of views, one considers oneself to be extremely intelligent. In actual fact, such a person as this is thoroughly confused in what he does. He may be smart, but he ends up outsmarting himself. He clearly knows that murder is not a good thing to do, but he goes out and kills people. He knows that one should not steal but he commits robbery. Sure, he's smart, all right, and he's an effective speaker, but his own actions are a total mess. Someone like this has **"greed for views" –** he's intelligent, but his conduct is disreputable, and he **"commit offenses."** Because of the offenses, he falls into the Unintermittent Hells and there passes through hundreds of thousands of millions of aeons. After his term is served, he's free, but when he gets out of the hells, what do you suppose happens to him? Well, he doesn't change his old habits. He's still endowed with worldly intelligence that goes awry and so **"he takes shape when he encounters essential energy, and he is called a wang-liang ghost."** If he encounters a person who is robust and full of energy, or if he encounters some weird essence, he will make his appearance. What do *wang liang* ghosts look like? Sometimes they will turn into a child. But whereas most children have two legs, this ghost will have one. Sometimes it will appear as an adult, but whereas people's heads are between their shoulders, its head will grow out from between its legs. Have you ever seen anything like that? If you do, you'll know that it's what's called a *wang liang* ghost. It's always just a little off in its appearance – weird looking.

It also acts as an "accomplice for tigers." How does it do that? Say, for example, that a certain mountain region is infested with tigers, so that no one dares to traverse that area for fear of being attacked and eaten. What this ghost does in such a place is to transform himself into the appearance of a person and go walking along the road there. When an actual person sees that there appears

to be a person on the road ahead of him, he is not afraid, and he follows along into the dangerous area. Who would have guessed that the *wang liang* would lead the person right to the tiger's den? That's his game, to help tigers get their meals. He cheats animals this way just as he does people; he turns into one of their kind and leads them to their doom. Those who profess not to believe that there are ghosts should pay attention to these descriptions.

J9 Servant ghosts result from the habit of deceit and take form when they encounter brightness.

Sutra:

"If it was greed for deception that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he takes shape when he encounters brightness, and he is called a servant ghost.

Commentary:

"If it was greed for deception that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he takes shape when he encounters brightness." This refers to the habit of deception. Since he wants accomplishments, he gets them by deceiving other people, acting in underhanded ways. By doing this, he commits many offenses and falls into the Unintermittent Hells. After passing through hundreds of thousands of aeons, he finally gets free, but he still hasn't gotten rid of his left-over habits, and so he still wants to cheat people. Therefore, he takes his shape when he meets brightness. "Brightness" refers to people with wisdom who know how to recite mantras. Or you could say it refers to a "bright teacher." When this ghost meets with that kind of a wise person, it makes its appearance. What does it do? It attends upon such people so **is called a servant ghost.**" It helps such people do the things they want to do.

In China there was a man named Chi Hsiao T'ang who had five servant ghosts that helped him out. One went about gathering news – keeping up on the latest goings-on. Another ghost helped Chi Hsiao T'ang listen to things. Since ghosts have five penetrations,

they could see things that the ordinary eyes cannot see. Ghosts lack the penetration of the extinction of outflows, but they can possess the other five.

1. the penetration of the heavenly eye
2. the penetration of the heavenly ear
3. the penetration of others' thought
4. the penetration of past lives
5. the penetration of the complete spirit

These kinds of ghosts have a little cultivation, some practice the Way, and so they are endowed with these spiritual penetrations. The ghosts that attended on Chi Hsiao T'ang could know what people were talking about and could see what was happening at great distances to find out what was happening round and about, and then he would use that information to go and rescue people from difficulty. For example, he would find out that at such and such a place there were some weird creatures out to harm people, and he would immediately go to that place and subdue the weird beings and exorcise the strange creatures. These five servant ghosts helped him in that way. They got to be servant ghosts because in the past they were greedy to deceive others.

J10 Messenger ghosts result from the habit of litigiousness and take form when they encounter people.

Sutra:

"If it was greed to be litigious that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he takes shape when he encounters people, and he is called a messenger ghost.

Commentary:

"If it was greed to be litigious that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he takes shape when he encounters people." "Litigious" refers to getting involved in court cases. Sometimes when people go to

court, they get together a party or faction to support their case. These people offer testimony on the instigator's behalf, but they tell stories and invent evidence. What really isn't true, they say is true; what is actually not so, they say is so. They argue their case when there is really no principle behind it. Often they are lawyers and the like. They challenge the people who are not of their faction, and they win their cases.

A person who does this kind of thing commits offenses. When he has finished paying for his wrongdoing, he takes his shape when he encounters a person, **"and he is called a messenger ghost."** This kind of ghost possesses a person and speaks through him, saying such things as, "I am such and such a Buddha," or "I am such and such a Bodhisattva," or "I am God. I am also Jesus." A person who is so possessed will be restless and have a lot of nervous mannerisms. He's called a "messenger" because he can predict lucky and unlucky events. He may say, "There's going to be an earthquake at such and such a place, and it will kill more than ten thousand people." When the time comes, his prediction is completely accurate. He can foretell the future.

Someone doubts that such predictions are really accurate. But in fact they are often extremely accurate. It's right at this place that you need to know how to distinguish between the proper and the deviant. The proper is recognized as having come from cultivation of the Way. It's not that you rely on a ghost or spirit or a Bodhisattva or a Buddha to tell you such things. Be sure to recognize this clearly. In China, such people who are possessed by a ghost are called mediums or shamans. They are able to heal people. But it is not the person who does the healing. What does it is the ghost or the spirit which is possessing the person. It's like those people I described earlier who can stick knives into their skulls and swords into their shoulders. They are examples of possession by messenger ghosts.

I3 Probes the source and shows it to be non-existent.

Sutra:

"Ananda, such a person's fall is due to his totally emotional level of functioning. When his karmic fire has burned out, he will rise up to be reborn as a ghost. This is occasioned by his own karma of false thinking. If he awakens to Bodhi, then in the wonderful perfect brightness there isn't anything at all.

Commentary:

The Buddha calls out again, "**Ananda,** do you understand? **Such a person's fall is due to his totally emotional level of functioning."** It's because this person is totally immersed in emotion. Whatever he does is based on emotional desire. Because he's totally emotional, without any power of reason, without any discursive thought, he acts out of emotion, he functions out of desire, and that causes him to fall. Emotion belongs to yin, and discursive thought belongs to yang. After he falls and his **"karmic fire has burned out" –** after he goes to the hells and burns until there is nothing left to burn, he can come out, but **"he will** then **rise up to be reborn as a ghost."** He's released, but he still cannot become a person. Where does he "rise up" from? The evil hells. He gets out and comes to the world. But although he's out of the hells, his residual habits are still not cut off. Although the offenses from his karma have been eradicated, he still has the same old habits of thinking. He's not completely pure. So he has to become a ghost.

His predicament **"is occasioned by his own karma of false thinking."** In the one truth, he himself gave rise to falseness and produced ignorance. This ignorance arises in the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, and with it comes false thinking. It is false thinking that creates these kinds of karma. Because of it, the person in question must undergo this bitter retribution. He gave rise to delusion, created karma, and underwent retribution. **"If he awakens to Bodhi, then in the wonderful perfect brightness there isn't anything at all."** If he could fathom the wonderful path to Enlightenment, then there would be nothing at all in the mind,

which is perfect and bright in the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. There's none of this trouble. There are no such problems; there isn't any of this pain and suffering. There is no distress.

Destiny of Animals

H3 Destiny of animals.
I1 Concludes prior discussion and begins this.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Ananda, when his karma as a ghost is ended, the problem of emotion as opposed to discursive thought is resolved. At that point he must pay back in kind what he borrowed from others to resolve those grievances. He is born into the body of an animal to repay his debts from past lives.

Commentary:

"**Moreover, Ananda,** let me continue to explain this principle lest you fail to understand it completely. **When his karma as a ghost is ended, the problem of emotion as opposed to discursive thought is resolved."** He's wiped the slate clean of emotion and thought. **"At that point he must pay back in kind what he borrowed from others to resolve those grievances."** He has to pay back what he owes others. If he ate the flesh of other animals in the past, he will now be eaten by others. If he took others' lives in the past, then in this life he will be killed. **"He is born into the body of an animal to repay his debts from past lives."** He will pay back the debts amassed for limitless kalpas in the past. They have to be paid back in kind. If you killed and harmed others, then the same thing will happen to you as repayment. If you owe

someone a pig, then you become his pig to repay him. If you owe someone a dog, then you become his dog to repay him. If you owe someone a cow, you repay by being his cow. If you owe someone a horse, you become his horse to repay him. If you owe someone a chicken, then you go lay eggs for him. You lay a few eggs every day and in that way you gradually repay your debt. So it's not easy to act in this world's play. If you make a mistake, a lot of trouble results. If you do it correctly, then everything is clear and pure.

I2 Specifically lists ten categories.
J1 Owl category.

Sutra:

"The retribution of the strange ghost of material objects is finished when the object is destroyed and it is reborn in the world, usually as a species of owl.

Commentary:

Because strange ghosts were greedy for material objects, they took their shape when they encountered material objects. "When the object is destroyed" means that the particular material object they were possessing wears out, and their karmic retribution has come to an end. The majority of the strange ghosts are then reborn as owls. That's what usually happens, but it's not a totally fixed principle. There's a line in the *Book of Poetry*: "The owl, the owl, the unfilial bird." Some owls can incubate a clod of dirt and hatch it. How do you explain this? Well, it's just the strange way that they are. When the owlets hatch, they eat the parent bird. A child that eats its parents is a manifestation of a weird being. This kind of bird is considered to be inauspicious. Species means that they are born as one kind of owl or another.

J2 Inauspicious category.

Sutra:

"The retribution of the drought ghost of the wind is finished when the wind subsides, and it is reborn in the world, usually as

a species of weird creature which gives inauspicious prognostications.

Commentary:

Wherever drought ghosts happen to be, there will be no rain. Wherever they go, the land is arid. They were greedy for lustful experiences. Through lust they created karma, and eventually they became drought ghosts when they met with the wind. When they are finished with that retribution, they are reborn in the world, but they cannot become people. Instead they become weird beings that foretell evil. Why do they have to go through this? After creating the karma of lust, enduring the hells, and being reborn as drought ghosts, their residual habits are still not completely severed, and so they become such strange creatures as these. They may be reborn as birds that are extremely colorful, but have the habit of excessive lust, or they may be reborn as beasts that are fond of lust.

J3 Fox category.

Sutra:

"The retribution of the mei ghost of an animal is finished when the animal dies, and it is reborn in the world, usually as a species of fox.

Commentary:

For the most part, these *mei* ghosts are reborn as foxes after they have finished their karma as ghosts.

J4 Poisonous category.

Sutra:

"The retribution of the ku ghost in the form of worms is finished when the ku is exhausted, and it is reborn in the world, usually as a species of venomous creature.

Commentary:

A *ku* poison ghost takes its shape when it encounters worms. When the *ku* poison finally wears out and the ghost's retribution is

ended, it is reborn in the world as a venomous creature – as a scorpion, cobra, or the like.

J5 Tapeworm category.

Sutra:

“The retribution of a pestilence ghost found in degeneration is finished when the degeneration is complete, and it is reborn in the world, usually as a species of tapeworm.

Commentary:

“The retribution of a pestilence ghost found in degeneration is finished when the degeneration is complete.” Whoever encounters this kind of ghost will waste away. These ghosts are really terrible; their demonic power is tremendous. When its retribution is ended, **“and it is reborn in the world, usually as a species of tapeworm.”** These are the bugs in your intestines. I don’t know if this kind of sickness exists in the West, but in China, these tapeworms can communicate; they can talk. They can talk to the person whose stomach they are occupying. There’s no way to cure this kind of sickness with medicine, unless the person who has the sickness does not know that he is being given medicine. If the sick person knows it is medicine designed to eliminate the tapeworm, the tapeworm also knows. From this comes the expression, “You’re not a tapeworm in my stomach, so how do you know what I’m thinking?”

Not only can tapeworms do this, but other kinds of weird beings can get into one’s stomach and then carry on conversations. I’ve told you about the elder disciple I had in Hong Kong; she’s probably more than eighty years old by now. She was about sixty when she took refuge with me. At that time she was deaf. Regardless of the fact that she couldn’t hear, she came faithfully every time I gave a Sutra lecture. She only understood Cantonese to begin with, and I was lecturing in Mandarin, and though there was a translator, she couldn’t hear the translation. But she came anyway. It was more than three hundred steps up to the temple. I lectured

from seven to nine at night, and she would come up and go down all those stairs. There was no light on the path. Despite her age, she was not afraid of falling. She was very sincere. One day she heard the recitation of “Homage to the Lotus Pool Assembly of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas,” and thereafter her deafness was cured. She could hear again. That made her even more sincere, of course. Whenever I lectured and whatever Sutra it was on, she would come to hear. Wind and rain did not keep her away. But when you cultivate, if you are sincere, there will be demonic obstacles. As I’ve said before, if you want to cultivate well, your sins will catch up with you. Ties of resentment from your past lives will come to get you. If you want to become a Buddha, you have to endure the demons that come to test you. One night, then, this woman had a dream, or what seemed to be a dream and yet not to be one. In it she saw three plump children between the ages of two and three. After the dream she got sick. What was the nature of her illness? She had to eat all day long. She had to eat a meal every hour. She ate more than ten meals a day. Thinking it was a disease, she went to Western and Chinese doctors, but they told her she was not sick. This went on for two or three years. Finally one evening, on the seventh day of the second lunar month, the day before the celebration of Shakyamuni Buddha’s Accomplishment of the Way, when I’d come back from Tse Hsing Monastery on Da Yu Mountain, she said to me, “Shih Fu, how is it that there’s someone in my stomach talking to me?”

“What did it say?” I asked her.

She said, “Today I made some cakes with coarse rice. When I ate them, something in my stomach said to me, ‘I don’t like to eat that stuff.’”

“What did you say?” I asked.

She replied, “I said, ‘You get full, that’s good enough. If you don’t eat that, what are you going to eat?’” She talked back to her stomach like that.

I said, “Don’t worry, tonight I’ll make you well. Go back home, and light a stick of incense at your altar at midnight and recite the Buddha’s name.”

She went back and did as I said. As she did it, she saw three children come out of her stomach. They were the three plump ones she had seen in the dream. Then she saw Wei T’ou Bodhisattva set down two bowls of noodles, and the three children fought over the food. When they finished eating, Wei T’ou Bodhisattva pinched the three of them by the ear and dragged them away. After they were gone, she felt that her stomach was totally empty. From then on her sickness of liking to eat was cured.

Tapeworms, too, can talk in a person’s stomach. But what the old woman had were not tapeworms. They were three weird goblins; two were frogs, and one was a lizard. They were a kind of hungry ghost. Why did she have to endure this sickness? I looked into her causes and conditions, it became clear later that in a former life she was a Buddhist, and she knew someone who had this very same kind of sickness. He was already over the illness when she met him, but he told her about it. Her reaction was, “I don’t believe that. Who ever heard of someone having a hungry ghost in their stomach, a hungry ghost that could talk to them?” Because she said she didn’t believe it, she had to go through the personal experience in this life of having that same kind of illness. When she had it, there were a lot of people in Hong Kong who didn’t believe it either. They said, “Whoever heard of such a thing? It’s ridiculous.” These were Chinese people who didn’t believe – it’s not just Westerners who have a hard time believing it. And I believe that the people in Hong Kong who expressed disbelief will also get this kind of illness in some future life. The cycle of cause and effect is fierce.

J6 Food category.

Sutra:

"The retribution of the ghost which takes shape in gases is finished when the gases are gone, and it is then reborn in the world, usually as a species of eating animal.

Commentary:

Since in the past it was greedy to be arrogant, it committed offenses. Now these offenses are paid for, and it can enter the world of people, but for the most part it gets reborn as an eating animal. There are two ways to explain "eating" here. First, the animal can't do anything but eat. That's all it's good for, like a pig or a sheep. Second, it is eaten by people. People eat the flesh of the pigs and sheep, and of cattle and chickens. This ghost, then, gets reborn as an animal which people consume. These kinds of animals are often domesticated so that they can be fattened up and then slaughtered and eaten.

J7 Clothing category.

Sutra:

"The retribution of the ghost of prolonged darkness is finished when the darkness ends, and it is then reborn in the world, usually as a species of animal used for clothing or service.

Commentary:

This is the paralysis ghost. When it takes rebirth, it is usually as an animal used for clothing or service. Animals used for clothing would include silkworms and animals whose fur or hide is used to make clothes. "Service" refers to dogs and cats which spend their lives in the households of humans, being obedient to them and of same service to them.

J8 Migratory category.

Sutra:

"The retribution of the ghost which unites with energy is finished when the union dissolves, and it is then reborn in the world, usually as a species of migratory creature.

Commentary:

"The retribution of the ghost which unites with energy is finished when the union dissolves." These are the *wang liang* ghosts who take shape when they encounter essential energy. The text reads "when the union dissolves," but actually it should say "when the energy is dissolved. **It is then reborn in the world, usually as a species of migratory creature.**" These kinds of creatures have an instinct about time. They include the wild geese that, flying in formation, migrate north in the spring and south in the autumn. In the spring the swallows come and nest in the eaves. After they have reared their young they fly away again. They are another example of creatures that have an instinct for time and know when to migrate.

J9 Auspicious category.

Sutra:

"The retribution of the ghost of brightness and intellect is finished when the brightness disappears, and it is then reborn in the world, usually as a species of auspicious creature.

Commentary:

These are the servant ghosts. When they are reborn they become auspicious creatures like the unicorn, the phoenix, and such. They become animals and birds which are considered lucky.

J10 Domestic category.

Sutra:

"The retribution of the ghost that relies on a person is finished when the person dies, and it is then reborn in the world, usually as a species of domestic animal.

Commentary:

These kinds of animals are docile and obedient. Dogs, cats, horses, and the like are examples of this kind of rebirth.

I3 Probes the source and shows it to be non-existent.

Sutra:

"Ananda, all this is due to the burning out of his karmic fire in payment for his debts from past lives. The rebirth as an animal is also occasioned by his own false and empty karma. If he awakens to Bodhi, then fundamentally none of these false conditions will exist at all.

Commentary:

"**Ananda, all** the various kinds of rebirth just discussed are **due to the burning out of his karmic fire in payment for his debts from past lives. The rebirth as an animal is also occasioned by his own false and empty karma."** It's due to the karma he created in the past. **"If he awakens to Bodhi, then fundamentally none of these false conditions will exist at all."** If he awakens to the enlightened path, then all these false conditions will disappear. They are all empty.

I4 Repeats answer to prior question.

Sutra:

"You mentioned Precious Lotus Fragrance, King Crystal, and Bhikshu Good Stars. Evil karma such as theirs was created by them alone. It did not fall down out of the heavens or well up from the earth, nor was it imposed upon them by some person. Their own falseness brought it into being, and so they

themselves have to undergo it. In the Bodhi mind, it is empty and false – a cohesion of false thoughts.

Commentary:

"**You mentioned Precious Lotus Fragrance.** You remember what kind of a bhikshuni she was? Do you remember how she acted? **King Crystal, and Bhikshu Good Stars** were the others that you brought up. **Evil karma such as theirs was created by them alone.** They fell into the hells alive. But they brought it down on themselves. **It did not fall down out of the heavens or well up from the earth, nor was it imposed upon them by some person.** That is not how their evil karma came about. **Their own falseness brought it into being, and so they themselves have to undergo it. In the Bodhi mind, it is empty and false.** In the Bodhi mind, karma such as this is ephemeral and imaginary. It's not real; it is just **a cohesion of false thoughts.** The solidification of false thinking is what brings this karma into being.

Destiny of People

H4 Destiny of people.
I1 Traces prior teaching and the alarming result.
J1 The burden of debts must be repaid.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Ananda, if while repaying his past debts by undergoing rebirth as an animal, such a living being pays back more than he owed, he will then be reborn as a human to rectify the excess.

Commentary:

He lives out a life as an animal in order to pay back the debts he made in the past. If in the process he pays back more than he needed to, he then gets reborn as a person again to make up the difference.

Sutra:

"If he is a person with strength, blessings, and virtue, then once he is in the human realm, he will not have to lose his human rebirth after what is owed him is restored. But if he lacks blessings, then he will return to the animal realm to continue repaying his debts.

Commentary:

"If he is a person with strength, blessings, and virtue, then once he is in the human realm, he will not have to lose his

human.” “Strength” means that he has the power of good karma. If on top of that he accumulates blessings and virtue, then he won’t have to lose a human body **“after what is owed him is restored” –** after he’s been paid back for the overpayment of debts he made while he was in the animal realm. **“But if he lacks blessings, then he will return to the animal realm to continue repaying his debts.”** He’ll get reborn as an animal again to go on paying what he owes. There is no way to get off easy or cheat anyone out of anything. It must be just. Although there isn’t any actual person controlling the whole process, the power of one’s own karma is such that it does not allow any injustice. No one takes a loss unfairly.

J2 The burden of life: killing to eat is endless.

Sutra:

“Ananda, you should know that once the debt is paid, whether with money, material goods, or manual labor, the process of repayment naturally comes to an end.

Commentary:

“**Ananda, you should know that,** while in the human realm, **once the debt is paid, whether with money, material goods, or manual labor, the process of repayment naturally comes to an end.”** When the repayment is sufficient, the work naturally stops.

Sutra:

“But if in the process he took the lives of other beings or ate their flesh, then he continues in the same way, passing through kalpas as many as motes of fine dust, taking turns devouring and being slaughtered in a cycle that sends him up and down endlessly.

Commentary:

“**But if in the process,** when he is tying up conditions with other beings, **he took the lives of other beings or ate their flesh, then he continues in the same way, passing through kalpas as**

many as motes of fine dust, taking turns devouring and being slaughtered in a cycle that sends him up and down endlessly." He gets caught in a cycle that goes on for aeons and aeons, a cycle of eating and being eaten, killing and being killed. It goes on and on like the turning of a wheel – you eat me, and I eat you – one doesn't know how long it lasts. He goes up and down, depending on whether he ate more or was eaten more. But it never stops. It is ceaseless. It's extremely dangerous.

Sutra:

"There is no way to put a stop to it, except through Shamatha or through a Buddha's coming to the world.

Commentary:

"Shamatha" is the Buddha's "still and illumining" samadhi; except through cultivating it and through upholding the durable Shurangama Samadhi, to obtain the Great Shurangama Samadhi, there's no respite from this karmic obstacle, unless a Buddha comes into the world to release one from the appearance of these karmic offenses. Then both parties will know that they should not continue creating such karma. Only in that way can the cycle be stopped.

I2 A detailed listing of the ten categories.
J1 The category of corrupt and obstinate people.

Sutra:

"You should know that when owls and their kind have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are born as people, but among those who are corrupt and obstinate.

Commentary:

"Their kind" refers to any other birds that are evil like owls are. Once they have undergone their karmic retribution, they return to their original form as human beings. But, although they are born again as people, they are corrupt and obstinate. When these creatures take birth again in the human realm, they become people who are totally perverse and hardheaded. They are stubborn and refuse to yield. They are totally unreasonable and unprincipled.

Quite often they become robbers. They don't listen to reason. If you tried to explain some Buddhadharma to them, they would run away. "Among those who are corrupt and obstinate" means that they get together with such people – people like themselves. So it is said:

People join up with those who are like them,
Creatures divide into their various species.
The good get together,
The bad form gangs,
People find people who are of their own kind.

Students spend their time with other students. Workmen join together with other workmen. Gamblers get together with gamblers. Opium smokers mingle with other opium smokers. Hippies form communes with other hippies. It's all a manifestation of this principle – people find their own kind.

J2 The category of abnormal people.

Sutra:

"When creatures that are inauspicious have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are born as people, but among those who are abnormal.

Commentary:

After they undergo their karmic retribution, they can be born in the human realm again, but as freaks. You see mention of this type of rebirth in the newspapers all the time. A woman gives birth to a child with two heads or a child that has two bodies but only one head. Or the infant's six sense organs will be out of place. Perhaps the eyes will be where the ears should be and the ears where the eyes belong. The nose may be where the mouth should be. The mouth may be where the nose should be. The sense organs exchange places. For the six sense-organs to be irregular is what is meant by "abnormal." Often such people die as soon as they are born, but even so they are counted as freaks. In general, "abnormal" means that there is something not right about them.

J3 The category of simple people.

Sutra:

"When foxes have paid back their debts, they regain their original forms and are born as people, but among those who are simpletons.

The fox is extremely intelligent. But his intelligence is of a ghostly kind. That is, it is false, and so when he gets rebirth as a person again, he has to be a simpleton. He becomes a very dense kind of person. You can say something to him over and over and he still won't understand. If you leave him alone, he gets along all right, but as soon as you try to reason with him or explain something, it becomes obvious that he's completely out of it. He can't understand at all.

J4 The category of hateful people.

Sutra:

"When creatures of the venomous category have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are born as people, but among those who are hateful.

Commentary:

"**When creatures of the venomous category –** including things like poisonous snakes and vicious beasts **– "have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are born as people, but among those who are hateful."** When they finish out their retribution, they come back in the world as people, but although they manage to get reborn in the human realm, they still have not changed their bad habits. They are extremely cruel and fierce. They are obstinate and angry. If they say they are going to kill someone, they do just that. That's because they are still like poisonous snakes who take no heed of whether their actions are justifiable or not; if you get in their way, they will bite and kill you and talk about it later. As people, they continue along in that same kind of evil habit of killing people. They are terribly cruel and

unreasonable. Their poisonous habits haven't changed since their lives as snakes.

The *Shurangama Sutra* discussion of human nature and the nature of all creatures is an extremely detailed one. If you investigate it carefully, you see that it is all minutely set forth.

J5 The category of lowly people.

Sutra:

"When tapeworms and their like have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are born as people, but among those who are lowly.

Commentary:

"When tapeworms and their like have paid back their debts, they regain their original form." Do you remember that tapeworms are able to talk? Pretty strange, wouldn't you say? When this kind of creature has paid back its debts from former lives, then it can become a person again. Although it becomes a person, it lives out that human life **"among those who are lowly."** Very worthless people, they are, who must work for others and do menial tasks. They are inferior, unimportant, and insignificant people.

J6 The category of weak people.

Sutra:

"When the edible types of creatures have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are reborn as people, but among those who are weak.

Commentary:

"**When the edible types of creatures,** who have been reborn as animals that people like to eat, **have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are reborn as people, but among those who are weak."** When their karmic obstacle dissolves, they go back to being people again, but they must be reborn among the

weak, because they have not changed their bad habits from the past. They are very manipulable. They cannot manage on their own in the world. In all that they do they have to rely on others for support. They are cowardly and meek to a fault.

J7 The category of laborers.

Sutra:

"When creatures that are used for clothing or service have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are reborn as people, but among those who do hard labor.

Commentary:

"When creatures that are used for clothing or service have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are reborn as people." Living beings whose bodies or by-products are used for people's apparel or who must live a life of obedience and service to a human being eventually pay back their debts and can be reborn as people. But when they get born in the human realm it is **"among those who do hard labor."** That's their lot in life.

J8 The category of literate people.

Sutra:

"When creatures that migrate have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are reborn as people among those who are literate.

Commentary:

"**When creatures that migrate –** wild geese and ducks – migratory birds and beasts **– have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are reborn as people among those who are literate."** But their literary skills are not great. They have a little ability, that's all. They appear to be cultured, but they don't have exceptional talent.

J9 The category of intelligent people.

Sutra:

"When auspicious creatures have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are reborn as people among those who are intelligent.

Commentary:

Their intelligence is not profound, however; it is a worldly intelligence which is skilled in argument.

J10 The category of well-informed people.

Sutra:

"When domestic animals have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are reborn as people among those who are well-informed.

Commentary:

People like this comprehend what's going on. They understand social graces. But they do not have a genuine and comprehensive understanding that penetrates the past and present. They are not that well-educated. They simply attain a superficial kind of success in dealing with the world.

I3 Concludes with an expression of pity.

Sutra:

"Ananda, these are all beings that have finished paying back former debts and are born again in the human realm. They are involved in a beginningless scheme of karma and being upside down in which their lives are spent killing one another and being killed by one another. They do not get to meet the Thus Come One or hear the Proper Dharma. They just abide in the wearisome dust, passing through a repetitive cycle. Such people can truly be called pitiful.

Commentary:

"Ananda, these are all beings that have finished paying back former debts and are born again in the human realm." Eventually they finished repaying the karmic debts they had to pay, and they get to become people. But **"they are involved in a beginningless scheme of karma and being upside down in which their lives are spent killing one another and being killed by one another."** They keep creating the same kind of upside-down evil karma by killing and being killed. "**They do not get to meet the Thus Come One –** they never encounter a Buddha **– or hear the Proper Dharma. They just abide in the wearisome dust, passing through a repetitive cycle.**" They remain forever in the wearisome mundane world. The "repetitive cycle" means that it's exactly the same over and over again. That's just how it always is for them. **"Such people can truly be called pitiful."** The Buddha says that beings like these are very pathetic.

Destiny of Immortals

H5 The destiny of immortals.
I1 Concludes prior passage and begins this.

Sutra:

"Furthermore, Ananda, there are people who do not rely on proper enlightenment to cultivate samadhi, but cultivate in some special way that is based on their false thinking. Holding to the idea of perpetuating their physical bodies, they roam in the mountains and forests in places people do not go and become ten kinds of immortals.

Commentary:

"Furthermore, Ananda, there are people who do not rely on proper enlightenment to cultivate samadhi." They do not rely on the Great Enlightened Way of Bodhi. They do not rely on the Great Shurangama Samadhi, and they do not cultivate the skill of turning back their hearing to hear the self-nature. What they cultivate is a deviant samadhi of the externalist paths. It is based on false thinking and on the urge to climb on conditions – to take advantage of situations. They think like this: "I'll cultivate now, and when I accomplish some karma in the Way I'll display my spiritual penetrations for everyone to see. I'll get them to believe in me, respect me, make obeisance to me, and make offerings to me." That's what's meant by taking advantage of situations. It's not for

the sake of becoming a Buddha or for the sake of practicing and upholding the Buddhadharma and causing it to spread and grow that they cultivate. They develop their skill with the idea of getting offerings for themselves. They display both greed and stupidity in that way. So they **"cultivate in some special way that is based on their false thinking."** What do they have in mind? **"Holding to the idea of perpetuating their physical bodies, they roam in the mountains and forests in places people do not go and become ten kinds of immortals."** They have the false thought that they will make their bodies strong and enduring, that they will become as solid as rock – that their bodies will never go bad. They go deep into the mountains or perhaps find an isolated island.

I2 Lists the immortals.
J1 Earth-traveling immortals.

Sutra:

"Ananda, some living beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong with doses of medicine. When they have perfected this method of ingestion, they are known as earth-traveling immortals.

Commentary:

"Ananda, some living beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong with doses of medicine." They take this medicine with one aim in mind – to become an immortal "Unflagging resolution" means that they are consistent in their practice. All the people to be discussed in this section are extremely faithful when it comes to their practice. It's not that they do it today and neglect it tomorrow. Every day, day after day, they develop their particular kind of skill. In this case it's ingesting drugs. By this they hope to gain immortality so that they don't have to die. **"When they have perfected this method of ingestion, they are known as earth-traveling immortals."** The result of their efforts is that they are very light when they walk. Their bodies are buoyant. They can run very swiftly over the ground. They get to higher speeds than the emu in Australia, which can run as much as forty miles an hour.

This immortal travels over the ground as if he were flying; that's how he gets his name.

J2 Flying immortals.

Sutra:

"Some of these beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through the use of grasses and herbs. When they have perfected this method of taking herbs, they are known as flying immortals.

Commentary:

"Some of these beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through the use of grasses and herbs." They pursue this practice with firm determination. If someone were to tell them to discontinue it, they could not do it. Their minds are like rock or iron. They are tougher than nails when it comes to perfecting their method of practice. In this case it is the use of grasses and herbs. They concoct a pill out of certain herbs and trees. They eat it every single day without fail. And due to their determination and to their wish to succeed, the method eventually starts to work. **"When they have perfected this method of taking herbs, they are known as flying immortals."** Their bodies are as light as a wisp of smoke, and they can mount the clouds and drive the fog.

J3 Roaming immortals.

Sutra:

"Some of these beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through the use of metal and stone. When they have perfected this method of transformation, they are known as roaming immortals.

Commentary:

"Some of these beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through the use of metal and stone." Their minds are determined – extremely strong and steadfast. They make a stove for concocting pills. They mix mercury and lead together,

heating and reheating it, smelting and re-smelting it. They may smelt it for forty-nine days or for twenty-one days. It depends on the prescription they are taught. They combine gold and silver and when these too are sufficiently smelted they put all the ingredients together and eat the result. They're called pills of immortality; it's wonderful medicine. If one takes a pill of immortality one can "cast off the womb and transform one's bones." This is just a brief mention of the secret prescriptions for forging immortality. If they are successful, **"when they have perfected this method of transformation, they are known as roaming immortals."** "Method of transformation" refers to the changes that take place as a result of the pills they concoct. The pills have a special ability to create change. As roaming immortals, they can go wherever they want.

J4 Space-traveling immortals.

Sutra:

"Some of these beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through movement and cessation. When they have perfected their breath and essence, they are known as space-traveling immortals.

Commentary:

"Some of these beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through movement and cessation." These beings work with determination on movement and cessation. "Movement" can refer to the time that they work on developing their skill. "Cessation," then, is when they stop working. "Movement" can also refer to exercise such as *t'ai chi ch'uan*. "Cessation," then, is when they cultivate stillness. That is, they sit there and smelt the essence until it transforms into energy, they smelt the energy until it transforms into spirit, and they smelt the spirit until it returns to emptiness. How do they smelt the essence into energy? They sit in meditation and do not allow their essence to escape. They don't go near women. When their essence doesn't escape, it reverts inward. In that way it turns into energy, into prana. This energy becomes fused throughout the body. They

manage to do it by concentrating their thoughts on it, just the way a chicken hatches an egg. They think about how their essence is being transformed into energy, how the energy is pervading their body, and then how it is being transformed into spirit. Then they smelt the spirit until it returns to emptiness – until it becomes like emptiness itself. They then smelt the emptiness until it returns to nothing. They go to the point that there's nothing at all. At that point they feel very free and at ease. They can "go out esoterically and enter the female." That's the way the Taoists phrase it. That means they can go out from the top of their heads. The Taoists in China practiced exactly the methods that Shakyamuni Buddha describes here. They have a book called *Wu Shang Yu Huang Hsin Yin Miao Ching*. They consider this book a real treasure. It tells how to smelt the essence to transform it into energy, smelt the energy to transform it into spirit, smelt the spirit to transform it into emptiness, and smelt the emptiness to transform it into nothing. These immortals can walk around in space. They can go out from the top of their heads. There are a lot of strange and esoteric things in this world. There's another Taoist book for sale called *Wa Lia Hsien Tsung*. In it there are pictures of a man sending a small person out the top of his head, and that small person sending out another small person, and so forth until there are lots of small people. That's supposed to be "millions of transformation bodies." But I'll tell you, making millions of transformation bodies is not as much trouble as all that. These Taoist books are just totally involved in attachment to appearances. Making transformation bodies can be done at will . There's no fixed formula for creating them. **When they have perfected their breath and essence, they are known as space-traveling immortals.**

J5 Heaven-traveling immortals.

Sutra:

"Some beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong by using the flow of saliva. When they have perfected the

virtues of this moisture, they are known as heaven-traveling immortals.

Commentary:

The previous immortal could roam in space. This one can go up to the heavens. **"Some beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong by using the flow of saliva."** When the tongue is placed on the roof of the mouth, the saliva flows down from above. Adherents of externalist paths call this "sweet dew," "heavenly drinking water," and a lot of other names. The process is complete when the saliva flows down and is swallowed into the stomach. Taoists call this the elixir of immortality. They have a saying;

If you want to live forever
and not grow old,
You must return the essence
to nurture the brain.

They contemplate having their essence form a cluster on top of their heads; in this way they strengthen their brains.

These particular immortals continually swallow the saliva and internalize the breath in a regularly scheduled practice. **"When they have perfected the virtues of this moisture, they are known as heaven-traveling immortals."** Eventually their faces take on a glow. Although they are very old, their faces are like children's. They are red cheeked and fresh like a young boy's. These are the heaven-traveling immortals.

J6 Immortals of penetrating conduct.

Sutra:

"Some beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong with the essence of sun and moon. When they have perfected the inhalation of this purity, they are known as immortals of penetrating conduct.

Commentary:

"Some beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong with the essence of sun and moon." Their minds are firm and resolved. These immortals make a practice of breathing in the essence of the sun and the secretions of the moon. They convert the sunlight and moonlight. **"When they have perfected the inhalation of this purity, they are known as immortals of penetrating conduct."** They can travel to the heavens or anywhere else they want to go. How do they go about this practice? For example, in the morning they face the sun and make three hundred and sixty inhalations. In the evening they face the moon and make three hundred and sixty inhalations. They put all their time into smelting their stinking skin bags. That's what our bodies are – stinking skin bags. The Venerable Master *Hsu Yun* wrote the *Song of a Skin Bag* in expression of this fact. But this type of immortal puts all his energy into developing this kind of skill. They don't know that they should put that effort into developing the self-nature. So the difference between Taoism and Buddhism is that the former uses effort on what is apparent and the latter uses effort on what is not apparent. So one has an attachment and the other doesn't. That's the difference. Actually, the way of the immortals and the Buddhist Way are similar. The point is that one is involved in attachments and the other is not. The kind of skill these immortals develop is basically all right, but they get attached to it. They become totally engrossed in appearances. Because of that they have a hindrance. They feel they have to do things in a certain way. Because they have this hang-up, they cannot get completely out of the cycle of rebirth. They don't gain ultimate understanding and release. These are called immortals with penetrating conduct.

The first five immortals described previously were said to have one sort of "travel" or another because they are basically bound to the earth and cannot roam in the higher realms. The latter five, now being described, are said to have one kind of "conduct" or another, because they are more advanced and can roam in the higher regions.

J7 Immortals with way-conduct.

Sutra:

"Some beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through mantras and prohibitions. When they have perfected these spells and dharmas, they are known as immortals with Way-conduct.

Commentary:

These beings have a firm determination to recite mantras. The Tibetan Lamas are an example of this category, provided that they perfect their skills. **"Some beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through mantras and prohibitions."** They recite mantras and always hold prohibitive precepts. **"When they have perfected these spells and dharmas, they are known as immortals with Way-conduct."**

J8 Immortals with illumining conduct.

Sutra:

"Some beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through the use of thought-processes. When they have perfected thought and memory, they are known as immortals with illumining conduct.

Commentary:

"Some beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through the use of thought-processes." They turn their determination to their thoughts – without resting, they develop total thought. **"When they have perfected thought and memory, they are known as immortals with illumining conduct."** When they perfect this practice, they have a bit of light. In their thoughts they imagine that they are transformed into golden light. When they cherish this thought for a long time, eventually it's just like the old mother hen on her eggs, or the cat stalking the mouse: there's some success. That's why they are called immortals with illumining conduct. They have some light.

J9 Immortals with essential conduct.

Sutra:

"Some beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through intercourse. When they have perfected the response, they are known as immortals with essential conduct.

Commentary:

Usually "intercourse" refers to the sexual act between men and women. But that is definitely not the meaning here. Rather, the intercourse takes place within oneself. The Taoists call this the "young boy and girl." Each individual is capable of it. It's not a matter of seeking outside oneself. Everyone has a young boy and girl in his or her own body. The young boy refers to the trigram *li* (離) and the young girl refers to the trigram *k'an* (坎). This is an allusion to the trigrams. The trigram *li* is "empty in the middle." The trigram *k'an* is "full in the middle."

The eight trigrams are:

They begin with the trigram *chien* (乾), which consists of three unbroken lines. *Chien* represents the male element. *Kun* (坤) is three broken lines and represents the female element. At age thirty-six a man's *ch'ien* trigram is at its peak. Thereafter it will decline, and it turns into the trigram *li*. The *li* trigram has two outer *yang*

lines and an inner *yin* line. Where did the *yang* line from the middle of the *li* go? It went over to the *kun* trigram, which subsequently turns into *kan*, which consists of two *yin* outer lines with a middle *yang* line.

The *li* trigram belongs to the mind and the *kan* trigram belongs to the body. So the "intercourse" referred to in this passage is the intercourse of "body" and "mind" as described here. The "intercourse" is simply an analogy for a union of body and mind. The entire process takes place in one individual's body. The *li* trigram belongs to *yang*, but within the *yang* is *yin*. The *kan* trigram belongs to *yin*, but within the *yin* is *yang*.

The infant boy and girl meet
at the yellow courtyard.

What is the yellow courtyard? It's the mind – the sixth consciousness. And the mind belongs to the hexagram *pi*. It would get tremendously involved if we were to go into this doctrine in detail. Time simply does not permit me to explain it further. In any event, the Taoists cultivate the Dharma-door of this kind of intercourse. When people with deviant knowledge and deviant views see this passage of the *Shurangama Sutra*, they surmise that it says it's all right for men and women to mess around together – that cultivators of the Way can get away with that. So they get all mixed up together and don't hold the precepts at all.

J10 Immortals of absolute conduct.

Sutra:

"Some beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through transformations and changes. When they have perfected their awakening, they are known as immortals of absolute conduct.

Commentary:

"Some beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through transformations and changes." Here it says that

with firm resolve a cultivator investigates various kinds of dharma-tricks. When he's succeeded in developing them, he has some ability to function by means of them. Then his skill of cultivation is perfected. **"When they have perfected their awakening, they are known as immortals of absolute conduct."** They understand the doctrine of creation. This kind of immortal can move mountains and turn over seas. It's possible for them to exchange the mountains in the north for the mountains in the south. They can move seas around in the same way, replacing the ocean in the west with the ocean in the east and vice versa. They have the power to change the seasons. For example, when it's cold in the winter so that things won't grow, they can make it so that the things they have planted will grow and won't freeze. They can make the hottest places cool and the coldest places warm. They can turn spring into winter and summer into winter at will: they can turn spring, when things should be blossoming, into autumn, when things are dying. How can they do it? They have fathomed the doctrine of creation of heaven and earth and they can function by means of that understanding. They become capable of creation itself. They're called immortals of absolute conduct.

I3 Determines this is the same as the turning wheel.

Sutra:

"Ananda, these are all people who smelt their minds but do not cultivate proper enlightenment. They obtain some special principle of life and can live for thousands or tens of thousands of years. They retire deep into the mountains or onto islands in the sea and cut themselves off from the human realm. However, they are still part of the turning wheel, because they flow and turn according to their false thinking and do not cultivate samadhi. When their reward is finished, they must still return and enter the various destinies.

Commentary:

"Ananda, these are all people who smelt their minds but do not cultivate proper enlightenment." When they were people,

they smelted their bodies and minds. They did not cultivate the Shurangama Samadhi of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, which is neither produced nor extinguished. They didn't cultivate proper enlightenment. **"They obtain some special principle of life and can live for thousands or tens of thousands of years."** The various dharma doors described above are all ways they found which could extend the measure of their lifespans. Their gods of the externalist paths transmitted to them these externalist dharmas which preserve life. So they have very long lifespans. **"They retire deep into the mountains or onto islands in the sea and cut themselves off from the human realm."** They go to places where people cannot go. There is a Mount Sumeru in this world system, and surrounding it are seven golden mountains and seven seas of fragrant waters. Out beyond those mountains and seas there is a vast expanse of soft water. This water is such that if a bird's feather lands on the surface, it will sink to the bottom. The feather would float on ordinary water, but this water is so soft that it does not have the power to support anything on its surface. Obviously, if a bird's feather sinks, any other thing like a boat or raft would certainly sink, too. Only flying immortals can cross it. So these people who cultivate and become immortals fly over this water to isolated islands where people can never go. **"However, they are still part of the turning wheel, because they flow and turn according to their false thinking and do not cultivate samadhi."** Although they may live for thousands of years, they are still within the cycle of rebirth. They have not been able to end birth and death entirely. The reason they still must transmigrate is because they still have things they are attached to. Specifically, they want immortality – they want to live long and not grow old. That's their false thinking, and so they don't cultivate proper concentration power. **"When their reward is finished, they must still return and enter the various destinies."** When their lifespan finally ends, they will go to rebirth, and they might become people or asuras or gods, or they might end up in the hells or as hungry ghosts or animals. It's not for sure where they'll end up.

Destiny of Gods

H6 The destiny of gods.
I1 Lists the heavens.
J1 The six desire heavens.
K1 Relates the cause for this birth.

Sutra:

"Ananda, there are many people in the world who do not seek what is eternal and who cannot yet renounce the kindness and love they feel for their wives.

Commentary:

"Ananda, there are many people in the world who do not seek what is eternal." This can mean that they do not seek to eternally abide in the world, and it can also mean that they do not seek the eternally abiding nature of the true mind. "They **cannot yet renounce the kindness and love they feel for their wives.**"

K2 Desire divides into light and heavy.
L1 Heaven of four kings.

Sutra:

"But they have no interest in deviant sexual activity and so develop a purity and produce light. When their life ends, they draw near the sun and moon and are among those born in the Heaven of the Four Kings.

Commentary:

"But they have no interest in deviant sexual activity." Having sexual activity with someone other than one's spouse is called "deviant." That which occurs within the marriage is not considered to be lust and is not deviant. However, it is better to be sparing about such activity, even in marriage. It should not be excessive. When you cultivate the Way, no matter how much merit and virtue you may have, you must not engage in deviant lustful activity. If you cultivate, but cannot cut off such activity, then you won't be successful no matter how hard you work at cultivation.

These people being discussed in the text here are not interested in deviant lust, **"And so develop a purity and produce light."** If one does not pursue lustful activity, one will be pure, and out of that purity will come light – the natural light of virtue. So it is said:

Of all the myriad evils,
lust is the foremost.
Don't go down that road to death!

If one does not engage in deviant lust, then one's essence, breath, and spirit will be full and complete. From that fullness comes the virtuous light. During one's life one will glow and radiate with light. **"When their life ends, they draw near the sun and moon and are among those born in the Heaven of the Four Kings."** This kind of rebirth includes a lot of people. One knows not how many people fit this category.

The Heaven of the Four Kings is located halfway up Mount Sumeru. It is the heaven closest to our human realm. The gods in this heaven have a lifespan of five hundred years. One day and night in that heaven is equivalent to fifty years in the human realm. So their lifespan is nine million years if calculated according to our time.

L2 Trayastrimsha heaven.

Sutra:

“Those whose sexual love for their wives is slight, but who have not yet obtained the entire flavor of dwelling in purity, transcend the light of sun and moon at the end of their lives, and reside at the summit of the human realm. They are among those born in the Trayastrimsha Heaven.

Commentary:

“Those whose sexual love for their wives is slight, but who have not yet obtained the entire flavor of dwelling in purity, transcend the light of sun and moon at the end of their lives.” Those born in the Heaven of the Four Kings did not engage in deviant sex, but had not managed to decrease their involvement with their own wives. However, they remained faithful to their wives and did not get involved with any other woman. The same holds true for women: they did not get involved with any man other than their own husbands. Beings born in the Heaven of the Four Kings did not have lovers when they were in the human realm.

Now the text discusses people who have decreased their sexual activity within the marriage. It can apply either to wives with regard to their husbands, or husbands with regard to their wives. “Slight” means that they very, very seldom engaged in this practice. They might not get involved with one another even once in a year, or they might go for several years getting involved only once. They do not look upon sexual activity as important.

Why do some people have such heavy sexual desire? It’s because of the heaviness of their karmic obstacles. Someone with few karmic obstacles, however, will not have such thoughts. Heavy karmic obstacles pursue people and cause them to think of nothing else but sex from morning till night. Such thoughts never stop. But it’s just in the midst of such heavy karmic obstacles that you should wake up and realize that you should decrease your karmic obstacles. If you simply go along with your karmic obstacles, then

the farther you go, the further you fall . In the future it's for certain you will become a cow or horse, a pig or a dog. And this kind of rebirth will go on and on without cease. Why? Because your emotional desire is too heavy. It will certainly cause you to fall. It's very dangerous.

Although the people discussed in this passage of text have very little regard for sexual activity, they still have not obtained the entire flavor of dwelling in purity. They have not gained genuine purity and its advantages, because they don't know how to cultivate. "At the end of their lives, then, they will transcend the light of sun and moon **and reside at the summit of the human realm.**" Because they don't have much emotional desire, the light of their self-nature comes forth. Anyone who does not have emotional desire will have light and will be able to be reborn in the heavens.

These people are **"among those born in the Trayastrimsha Heaven."** "Trayastrimsha" is Sanskrit and means Heaven "of the Thirty-Three." The Lord of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three resides above our heads. There are eight heavens in the east, eight in the west, eight in the north, and eight in the south, making thirty-two; the thirty-third is located among the others in the center and is at the peak of Mt. Sumeru.

How did the Lord of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three get reborn there? Originally she was a poor woman who saw a stupa which was falling apart. She resolved to repair it and set about begging and working to make the money to do it. Meanwhile, she got together with thirty-two friends; they had a meeting and decided to repair the stupa with their combined efforts. After they died, the thirty-two became Lords of the accompanying heavens and the woman became the Lord of the thirty-third heaven.

The lifespan of the gods in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three is a thousand years. A hundred years of human time makes up one day and night in that heaven. As we progress upwards, the inhabitants of each higher heaven have a lifespan double that of the heaven

below. The heights of the gods also increase proportionately. But it's rather tedious to go into all that, and so if you want to know about it in detail, you can investigate it on your own.

L3 Suyama heaven.

Sutra:

"Those who become temporarily involved when they meet with desire but who forget about it when it is finished, and who, while in the human realm, are active less and quiet more, abide at the end of their lives in light and emptiness where the illumination of sun and moon does not reach. These beings have their own light, and they are among those born in the Suyama Heaven.

Commentary:

There is a certain category of people in the world **"who become temporarily involved when they meet with desire but who forget about it when it is finished."** This refers to the activity of married couples. Although occasionally they engage in sexual intercourse, these people forget about it when it's gone by. They don't think about it afterwards. "**While** they are **in the human realm, are active less and quiet more.**" That means they spend the greater part of their time practicing Ch'an samadhi. They will **"abide at the end of their lives in light and emptiness where the illumination of sun and moon does not reach."** The light of the sun and moon do not shine where these people go. **"These beings have their own light"** when they reach that place in emptiness. Their own bodies emit an everlasting light, and so at that place there is no day and night. It's always light there. How then do they reckon the passage of time? They use the lotus flower. When the flower opens they know it is day; when the flower closes, it is night. These beings **"are among those born in the Suyama Heaven."** Their average height is two hundred twenty-five feet. Their lifespan is two thousand of their years. "Suyama" means "well-divided time" because it's always light there, day and night.

L4 Tushita heaven.

Sutra:

"Those who are quiet all the time, but who are not yet able to resist when stimulated by contact, ascend at the end of their lives to a subtle and ethereal place; they will not be drawn into the lower realms. The destruction of the realms of humans and gods and the obliteration of kalpas by the three disasters will not reach them, for they are among those born in the Tushita Heaven.

Commentary:

In this heaven there is an inner and an outer court. In the outer court the common gods dwell, and in the inner court Sages dwell. At present, Maitreya Bodhisattva dwells in the inner court of the Tushita Heaven. He is explaining about the Samadhi of Mind-consciousness Only. **"Those who are quiet all the time, but who are not yet able to resist when stimulated by contact, ascend at the end of their lives to a subtle and ethereal place; they will not be drawn into the lower realms."** At all times and in all situations they never move. They are very tranquil. However, when an occasion arises for sexual intercourse, it's not for certain that they will not get involved. But they don't really want to get involved. They may occasionally indulge in this activity, but very, very rarely. At death these people who have few desires and are content will ascend; their souls will go to a subtle and ethereal place and will not fall down.

"The destruction of the realms of humans and gods and the obliteration of kalpas by the three disasters will not reach them, for they are among those born in the Tushita Heaven." The three disasters are.

1) the disaster of fire
2) the disaster of water
3) the disaster of wind

Fire burns through the first dhyana, water drowns the second dhyana, and wind devastates the third dhyana. But because Bodhisattvas reside in this Tushita Heaven, the three disasters cannot reach it. "Tushita" means "having few desires and being content." They simply don't have any greed. They are devoid of sexual desire. So if you want to get reborn in the heavens, just have few desires and be content. To have strong emotions and to forever be thinking of that kind of thing, never being able to put it down for even an instant, though – that's very dangerous indeed. It is, in fact, the most perilous matter of all. It's the source of one's fall. If you don't fear the fall, then think about that kind of stuff as much as you want. If you are afraid of falling, then quickly stop those emotional thoughts. If you don't stop, there's no telling where you'll end up in the future.

L5 Heaven of bliss by transformation.

Sutra:

"Those who are devoid of desire, but who will engage in it for the sake of their partner, even though the flavor of doing so is like the flavor of chewing wax, are born at the end of their lives in a place of transcending transformations. They are among those born in the Heaven of Bliss by Transformation.

Commentary:

"Those who are devoid of desire, but who will engage in it for the sake of their partner, even though the flavor of doing so is like the flavor of chewing wax, are born at the end of their lives in a place of transcending transformations." "I don't have any desire at all, but you persist. You insist we do this thing." That's what transpires between couples where one partner is devoid of sexual desire while the other isn't. The one with desire pursues the one without desire. Have you ever chewed wax? Well , you can chew forever but you'll never get any taste from it. That's the analogy used to indicate that this kind of person gets no pleasure out of sex. They just don't have any thoughts of lust. After hearing this principle, you should certainly take care to control yourself.

Don't be loose any more. Don't run headlong down the road to death.'

The rebirth of the kinds of beings discussed here transcends those of the heavens discussed earlier; **"They are among those born in the Heaven of Bliss by Transformation."** Everything in their environment is transformed. It is an extremely blissful place – unspeakably joyous. But the bliss referred to is not like that of ordinary sexual involvement. It is a natural bliss. However, it is not an ultimate place of rebirth. It is still within the six desire heavens.

The gods in this heaven are three thousand and seventy-five feet tall. One day and night in that heaven is equal to eight hundred years among people, and their lifespan is eight thousand of their years.

L6 Heaven of the comfort from others' transformations.

Sutra:

"Those who have no kind of worldly thoughts while doing what worldly people do, who are lucid and beyond such activity while involved in it, are capable at the end of their lives of entirely transcending states where transformations may be present and may be lacking. They are among those born in the Heaven of the Comfort from Others' Transformations.

Commentary:

"**Those who have no kind of worldly thoughts** of sexual desire **while doing what worldly people do, who are lucid and beyond such activity while involved in it**" – these are people who occasionally involve themselves in intercourse with their marriage partner. But for them, not only does it have the flavor of wax, it's as if nothing were happening at all. They **"are capable at the end of their lives of entirely transcending states where transformations may be present and may be lacking."** They reach a state where they can go out of their bodies and transform as they please, endlessly. **"They are among those born in the Heaven of the Comfort from Others' Transformations."** Everything in the

environment of the heaven those beings go to does not originate there, but is rather a transformation made as an offering by beings in other heavens. It's extremely comfortable there. The bliss is vast, and there's no work to be done. There aren't any servants in that heaven – people who work for a living would starve there – because everything happens naturally and spontaneously. The bliss is extreme. It's a lot better than the human realm, that's for sure. But even though it's such a fine place, the beings there will nevertheless fall one day. Once they use up their heavenly blessings, they will fall back to the human realm or even into the hells – there's nothing fixed about it. Those heavenly beings are an average of four thousand five hundred feet tall. One day and night in that heaven is equal to fifteen hundred years on earth, and their lifespan is sixteen thousand of their years.

Those, then, are the Six Desire Heavens. All of the beings in those heavens still have sexual desire in varying degrees. A verse describes it:

In the Heaven of Four Kings and the Trayastrimsha,
Desire is carried out through embracing.
In the Suyama Heaven, they hold hands,
In the Tushita, they smile.
In the Bliss by Transformation, they gaze,
In the Comfort from Others', a glance will do.

In the Six Desire Heavens, this is the bliss they take to be true. "In the Heaven of the Four Kings and the Trayastrimsha, desire is carried out through embracing." They conduct sexual affairs the same way people do. "In the Suyama Heaven they hold hands; in the Tushita they smile." The beings in the Suyama Heaven unite in mind, but not physically. All they have to do to fulfill their sexual longing is to hold hands. In the Tushita Heaven, they smile. There's no physical contact involved. "In the Bliss by Transformation, they gaze. In the Comfort from Others', a glance will do." Men and women in the Bliss by Transformation Heaven need only look at one another – they don't even have to smile. They stare at each

other for maybe three minutes or five minutes; that's how their sexual intercourse is completed. In the next heaven a brief glance is sufficient. An instant is all it takes. The higher the heaven, the lighter the thoughts of sexual desire.

This is a true principle; you should understand it clearly. Once you do, you'll be able to genuinely understand the Buddhadharma, for you will know that sexual desire is tremendously harmful. Do you remember the earlier passage in the Sutra that says Bodhisattvas look upon sexual desire as they would a poisonous snake? They know they will be bitten to death. People's ordinary flesh-eyes cannot see how fierce it is. That's why they spend all their time, day and night, thinking about this nasty thing. They can't put it down. If you really understood, I think you wouldn't be so confused and upside down about it.

K3 Determines these belong to the desire realm.

Sutra:

"Ananda, thus it is that although they have transcended the physical in these six heavens, the traces of their minds still become involved. For that they will have to pay in person. These are called the Six Desire Heavens.

Commentary:

"Ananda, thus it is that although they have transcended the physical in these six heavens, the traces of their minds still become involved." Although they have transcended the physical plane, they still get hung up mentally. Their minds, natures, and bodies still act out thoughts of sexual desire. **"For that they will have to pay in person. These are called the Six Desire Heavens."** These heavens, from the Heaven of the Four Kings to the Heaven of Comfort from Others' Transformations, are called the Six Desire Heavens. The heavens are still in the Desire Realm because the beings in them are not totally pure. They still have thoughts of sexual desire.

J2 The four dhyana heavens.
K1 Four divisions.
L1 First dhyana heavens.
M1 Explains three heavens with different characteristics.
N1 Heaven of the multitudes of brahma.

Sutra:

"Ananda, all those in the world who cultivate their minds but do not avail themselves of dhyana and so have no wisdom, can only control their bodies so as to not engage in sexual desire. Whether walking or sitting, or in their thoughts, they are totally devoid of it. Since they do not give rise to defiling love, they do not remain in the realm of desire. These people can, in response to their thought, take on the bodies of Brahma beings. They are among those in the Heaven of the Multitudes of Brahma.

Commentary:

"**Ananda,** now we will talk about the Form Realm, the heavens of the Four Dhyanas. **All those in the world who cultivate their minds but do not avail themselves of dhyana and so have no wisdom, can only control their bodies so as to not engage in sexual desire.**" They haven't become skilled in the practice of dhyana – of stilling their thoughts, and so they don't have any genuine wisdom. What they can do is control their own bodies and refrain from engaging in lust. **"Whether walking or sitting, or in their thoughts, they are totally devoid of it."** Walking, standing, sitting, and lying down – even in their sleep – at all times and in all places **"they do not give rise to defiling love."** No matter how beautiful an object of form they may see, they do not give rise to defiling thoughts of love, and so **"they do not remain in the realm of desire. These people can, in response to their thought, take on the bodies of Brahma beings."** They join with other pure beings. None of them have any desire. **"They are among those in the Heaven of the Multitudes of Brahma."** They become part of the pure beings who inhabit this heaven. Each is a part of that general heavenly multitude – one among many.

N2 Ministers of brahma heaven.

Sutra:

"In those whose hearts of desire have already been cast aside, the mind apart from desire manifests. They have a fond regard for the rules of discipline and delight in being in accord with them. These people can practice the Brahma virtue at all times, and they are among those in the Heaven of the Ministers of Brahma.

Commentary:

"In those whose hearts of desire have already been cast aside, the mind apart from desire manifests. They have a fond regard for the rules of discipline and delight in being in accord with them." People by nature like food and sex. These habits are innate in them. But at this point, these beings have gotten rid of their habits of sexual desire. Since they don't have desire, the mind apart from desire appears. They cultivate the precepts and the rules of awesome deportment. They like the precepts and follow them in their cultivation. **"These people can practice the Brahma virtue at all times, and they are among those in the Heaven of the Ministers of Brahma."** At all times and in all situations, they cultivate pure practices. Their conduct is virtuous and pure. "Brahma" means purity. These people are born in the second heaven of the first dhyana. As ministers, they aid the Great Brahma Heaven King.

N3 Great brahma heaven.

Sutra:

"Those whose bodies and minds are wonderfully perfect, and whose awesome deportment is not in the least deficient, are pure in the prohibitive precepts and have a thorough understanding of them as well. At all times these people can govern the Brahma multitudes as great Brahma lords, and they are among those in the Great Brahma Heaven.

Commentary:

"**Those whose bodies and minds are wonderfully perfect,** in the matter of being without any thoughts of desire, **and whose awesome deportment is not in the least deficient, are pure in the prohibitive precepts and have a thorough understanding of them as well.**" They are not lacking in any of the three thousand awesome deportments or the eighty thousand minor aspects of conduct. They are perfect in them all. They uphold and are pure in all the precepts spoken by the Buddha. Not only do they hold them purely, they have a comprehensive understanding of them as well. They have enlightened to the appearance, substance, and dharma of the precepts. **"At all times these people can govern the Brahma multitudes as great Brahma lords, and they are among those in the Great Brahma Heaven."** When these people's lives end, they are born in the heavens and they are able to rule the multitude in the Brahma Heavens.

M2 Concludes they are apart from suffering and their outflows are subdued.

Sutra:

"Ananda, those who flow to these three superior levels will not be oppressed by any suffering or affliction. Although they have not developed proper samadhi, their minds are pure to the point that they are not moved by outflows. This is called the First Dhyana.

Commentary:

"Ananda, those who flow to these three superior levels will not be oppressed by any suffering or affliction." The three superior levels are the Heaven of the Multitudes of Brahma, the Heaven of the Ministers of Brahma, and the Great Brahma Heaven. These are transcendent levels – the heavens of the first dhyana – in which suffering and affliction do not harass one. "**Although they have not developed proper samadhi –** although they don't understand the Buddhadharma and are not cultivating the proper concentration power **– their minds are pure to the point that they**

are not moved by outflows.” They hold the precepts purely, and within the purity of their minds they are not moved by outflows. They don’t give rise to faults. They don’t get involved in the endless desires of the material world such as food, clothing, and all the objects of desire. Those are all outflows. The inhabitants of these heavens don’t have any of these weaknesses, afflictions, habits, or faults. **“This is called the First Dhyana.”** In cultivating the Way, your pulse stops if you reach the first dhyana. If you want to know whether you have any skill, check out your pulse. That’s a sign of this level, which is the first step in cultivation. It is not a lofty state.

L2 Second dhyana heavens.
M1 Explains three heavens with different characteristics.
N1 Lesser light heaven.

Sutra:

“Ananda, those beyond the Brahma heavens gather in and govern the Brahma beings, for their Brahma conduct is perfect and fulfilled. Unmoving and with settled minds, they produce light in profound stillness, and they are among those in the Heaven of Lesser Light.

Commentary:

“Ananda, those beyond the Brahma heavens gather in and govern the Brahma beings, for their Brahma conduct is perfect and fulfilled.” Those at the next level above the Heaven of the Multitudes of Brahma, the Heaven of the Ministers of Brahma, and the Great Brahma Heaven are capable of governing and gathering in the beings in these three heavens. That’s because they have perfectly learned the pure – “Brahma” – practices. **“Unmoving and with settled minds, they produce light in profound stillness.”** Their minds are tranquil and calm – they are unmoving. When there is stillness and profound tranquility, a kind of light will eventually emerge. These heavenly beings are **“among those in the Heaven of Lesser Light.”**

N2 Limitless light heaven.

Sutra:

"Those whose lights illumine each other in an endless dazzling blaze shine throughout the realms of the ten directions so that everything becomes like crystal. They are among those in the Heaven of Limitless Light.

Commentary:

"Those whose lights illumine each other in an endless dazzling blaze shine throughout the realms of the ten directions so that everything becomes like crystal." Their lights shine on one another. They illumine each other. Have you ever noticed how compatible lights are? There aren't any that won't unite. If you have light and someone else has light, the two lights will not contend. They will not fight with each other. Really'. Lights don't fight. It's never the case that a big light will bully a smaller light. There's no fuss among lights. That's what's being described here by the phrase, the "lights illumine each other." The combined illumination of these lights is infinite. It reaches throughout the ten directions, and everything seems to turn into crystal. These heavenly beings **"are among those in the Heaven of Limitless Light."**

N3 Light sound heaven.

Sutra:

"Those who take in and hold the light to perfection accomplish the substance of the teaching. Creating and transforming the purity into endless responses and functions, they are among those in the Light-Sound Heaven.

Commentary:

"Those who take in and hold the light to perfection accomplish the substance of the teaching." Together they obtain and uphold these lights and in this way perfect the substance of the teaching. In the Light-Sound Heaven, the beings do not have to

speak out loud to communicate with one another. They use light for their voices. They communicate by means of their lights. They don't speak with their mouths; they don't use language. Thus, light is the substance of teaching in that heaven. That's really a case of this:

The mind understands without a word being said.

When they shine on each other in that heaven, each knows what the other is communicating. Their ideas are transmitted by means of the light. **"Creating and transforming the purity into endless responses and functions, they are among those in the Light-Sound Heaven."** The function of their light is infinite.

M2 Concludes they are apart from worries and their outflows are subdued.

Sutra:

"Ananda, those who flow to these three superior levels will not be oppressed by worries or vexations. Although they have not developed proper samadhi, their minds are pure to the point that they have subdued their coarser outflows. This is called the Second Dhyana.

Commentary:

"Ananda, those who flow to these three superior levels will not be oppressed by worries or vexations." In the heavens of the first dhyana, they were not oppressed by suffering or affliction. However, they still were subject to worry. If something came up, they had a bit of a hard time putting it all down. They got hung up in things. But now, in the second dhyana heavens, there is no worry, and there aren't any hang-ups. "Not to be oppressed" means that they don't give rise to worry within. They don't even have any internal hang-ups. They are a far cry from ordinary people, who get hung up on everything that comes along and spend all day from morning to night worrying about something or other. "Hang-ups" are otherwise known as "impeding obstructions." **"Although they have not developed proper samadhi, their minds are pure to the**

point that they have subdued their coarser outflows." These heavenly beings have not been intent upon cultivating proper samadhi. But they do have a certain level of attainment when it comes to the purity of their minds. Their coarse outflows are under control. But they still haven't been able to deal with the subtler outflows. On the surface of things, then, the gods in the second dhyana heavens appear to be without any worry and hang-ups.

When people who cultivate the Way sit in meditation and enter the second dhyana, their breath will cease. In the first dhyana, the pulse stops. In the second, the breath stops. Now although it is said that they cease, do you remember what I just told you about the young boy and girl? The skill which the Taoists develop and that which Buddhists develop have certain basic similarities. They are largely the same, with minor differences. If someone's pulse stops, doesn't that just means he or she is dead? No, not in this case, because, although the external evidence of a pulse is gone, the pulse of the self-nature within is active. The same applies to the breath. The true breath and pulse of the self-nature awaken and take over, so the coarse, physical pulse can stop.

In the same way, when the external evidence of breath ceases in the second dhyana, it does not mean that the cultivator has died. He's entered the samadhi of the second dhyana and has obtained a certain purity and bliss. Still, it's only his coarser outflows which are under control. It's not the case that all outflows are extinguished at this level. **"This is called the Second Dhyana."**

L3 Third dhyana heavens.
M1 Explains three heavens.
N1 Lesser purity heaven.

Sutra:

"Ananda, heavenly beings for whom the perfection of light has become sound and who further open out the sound to disclose its wonder discover a subtler level of practice. They penetrate to the bliss of still extinction and are among those in the Heaven of Lesser Purity.

Commentary:

"Ananda, heavenly beings for whom the perfection of light has become sound and who further open out the sound to disclose its wonder discover a subtler level of practice." For them, perfect light has become sound, and when they distinguish this sound more clearly, it reveals a subtle and wonderful level of practice. **"They penetrate to the bliss of still extinction"** by means of this subtle and wonderful practice. Still extinction is the absence of thought. Their minds and natures are in still extinction, "**and** they **are among those in the Heaven of Lesser Purity.**" These gods are in the Heaven of Lesser Purity. They have obtained a small amount of genuine purity. It's not total purity.

N2 Limitless purity heaven.

Sutra:

"Those in whom the emptiness of purity manifests are led to discover its boundlessness. Their bodies and minds experience light ease, and they accomplish the bliss of still extinction. They are among those in the Heaven of Limitless Purity.

Commentary:

"Those in whom the emptiness of purity manifests are led to discover its boundlessness." They obtain genuine purity and afterward can discover the principle of emptiness. Knowing about emptiness, they are led to discover the boundlessness of purity. The purity has no end. **"Their bodies and minds experience light ease, and they accomplish the bliss of still extinction."** At that time they are truly free; they have self-mastery. They have truly arrived at the Wonderful Existence within True Emptiness and the True Emptiness within Wonderful Existence. Something takes place then that most people do not know can happen. Most people are greedy for external forms, and so they flow out.

Their nature flows out into emotion;
Their emotions flow out into desires.

The thought of sexual desire is produced. They become fixed in the notion that they must find a partner. Then they let the fire of their desire catch hold and become spent in external seeking. That's sex. But is it really necessary for there to be an external form in order to have this experience? No. Within True Emptiness there is True Form. If you understand, then True Form is just True Emptiness. You can perceive True Emptiness and Wonderful Existence right within this. The *Heart Sutra* says:

> *Form does not differ from emptiness; emptiness does not differ from form. Form is just emptiness; emptiness is just form.*

The bliss of still extinction – the principle of emptiness – is tens of millions of times more intense than the bliss derived from seeking external forms. If you want that experience, though, you must first stop your involvement with external forms. If you don't stop your involvement with external forms, the True Emptiness within you cannot manifest.

Here, these heavenly beings have been led to discover the endlessness of purity – and their bodies and minds experience light ease. This is to reach the level where,

> *Form does not differ from emptiness; emptiness does not differ from form. Form is just emptiness; emptiness is just form.*

You cannot fake this. You can't say you've reached this level if you haven't. It can't be experienced through mere words; it only counts if you are really there, just as only the person who drinks a glass of water knows if the water is cold or warm. These beings who have accomplished the bliss of still extinction are **among those in the Heaven of Limitless Purity.**"

N3 Pervasive purity heaven.

Sutra:

"Those for whom the world, the body, and the mind are all perfectly pure have accomplished the virtue of purity, and a superior level emerges. They return to the bliss of still extinction, and they are among those in the Heaven of Pervasive Purity.

Commentary:

"Those for whom the world, the body, and the mind are all perfectly pure have accomplished the virtue of purity." In the heaven discussed previously, only the body and mind experienced total purity. The beings in the heaven now discussed have accomplished their skill to the point that they can change the world itself. This world is basically impure, but they can transform it into a pure one. The principle here is the same one expressed in the saying:

> *The mind is itself the Pure Land;*
> *The self-nature is Amitabha Buddha.*

If your mind is pure, the Buddhalands are pure. If your mind is not pure, you do not perceive the purity of the Buddhalands, either. If you're in the Land of Ultimate Bliss itself but do nothing but cry all day long, then there's no bliss. If you're in the Saha World and you are happy from morning to night, then you're like the Bodhisattvas of the Ground of Happiness. The principle here is that "everything is made from the mind alone." It just remains to be seen if you can see through it all and put it down. If you can, you obtain comfort – self-mastery. If you can't see through everything and put it down, you won't experience comfort.

When these gods reach the point that they can purify the world, their bodies, and their minds, the purity and light of the virtuous nature is brought to perfection. Then **"a superior level emerges."** How is this superior level to be described? This is something

experienced in the mind. **"They return to the bliss of still extinction, and they are among those in the Heaven of Pervasive Purity."** There isn't any place that isn't true. They can purify everything in the entire Dharma Realm.

M2 Concludes they are tranquil and happy.

Sutra:

"Ananda, those who flow to these three superior levels will be replete with great compliance. Their bodies and minds are at peace, and they obtain limitless bliss. Although they have not obtained proper samadhi, the joy within the tranquility of their minds is total. This is called the Third Dhyana.

Commentary:

"Ananda, those who flow to these three superior levels will be replete with great compliance." That means they can comply with the minds of living beings. They can make living beings happy. **"Their bodies and minds are at peace, and they obtain limitless bliss."** They do not have any false thoughts in their minds, and so they do not act out false thoughts with their bodies. They experience no unrest in either body or mind. Those in the first two dhyana heavens got rid of their sufferings and afflictions, their worries and hang-ups. The beings in these heavens have no such experiences. Their bodies and minds are quiet and peaceful.

They are also dependable. How are they dependable? They have no thoughts of desire. They don't have to go through trying to find someone of the opposite sex in every thought they have and in every move they make, the way ordinary people do. When your body and mind are not at peace, then a new thought arises as soon as the last one ceases. "Ah, that person is beautiful." Or, "So-and-so is really handsome." All day long you think about that kind of stuff. But if one's body and mind are at peace – the kind of peace described in this passage – then those kinds of thoughts simply do not arise any more. It all boils down to this one problem. I keep talking and talking, but in the last analysis, what leads you to create

offenses is just this one problem. It's that first thought of ignorance that stirs up so many calamities as a consequence. Emotional love and desire come from that ignorance. So the first thing mentioned in the Twelve Causes and Conditions is ignorance. From ignorance comes activity, and from activity comes consciousness. Once there is consciousness, there is name and form. It all starts right there.

Although the beings described here have not broken through ignorance, nonetheless they obtain limitless bliss. **"Although they have not obtained proper samadhi, the joy within the tranquility of their minds is total."** They don't have genuine concentration, but in the peace and quiet of their minds there is a kind of joy. **"This is called the Third Dhyana."** When you reach the third dhyana, your thoughts do not arise. You obtain the genuine bliss of still extinction. It is said:

When no thought arises,
The entire substance appears.
When the six sense organs suddenly move,
One is covered as if by clouds.

That moment without any thought arising is the original substance of the Buddha; thus it says that "the entire substance appears." Your eyes taking a look and your ears listening is the movement by which you are obscured. You're in the clouds. You cover your self-nature over.

Before the stage now being discussed, one's thoughts were still active. For instance, when one's pulse stopped one would think, "How is it my pulse has stopped?" and with that one thought the pulse would begin to pump again. When one's breath stopped one thought, "I'm not breathing'." and as soon as one had that thought the breath started up again. That's what happened before the thoughts stopped. Now, in the third dhyana, there isn't any of that. If the pulse stops or the breath ceases – no matter what happens – one pays no attention. Such thoughts do not arise any more. One has no thoughts at all. They can't be found. That's what's meant by

the lines, "When no thought arises, the entire substance appears. ' These lines describe the state of the third dhyana.

L4 Fourth dhyana heavens.
M1 Four heavens of conquering the flow.
N1 Their particular characteristics.
O1 Heaven of the birth of blessings.

Sutra:

"Moreover, Ananda, heavenly beings whose bodies and minds are not oppressed put an end to the cause of suffering and realize that bliss is not permanent – that sooner or later it will come to an end. Suddenly they simultaneously renounce both thoughts of suffering and thoughts of bliss. Their coarse and heavy thoughts are extinguished, and they give rise to the nature of purity and blessings. They are among those in the heaven of the birth of blessings.

Commentary:

"Moreover, Ananda, heavenly beings whose bodies and minds are not oppressed put an end to the cause of suffering and realize that bliss is not permanent – that sooner or later it will come to an end." At this point, suffering, difficulty, worry, and hang-ups no longer oppress these beings physically or mentally. They don't plant the causes for suffering, but they can't count on the bliss being eternal. Eventually it will go bad. **"Suddenly they simultaneously renounce both thoughts of suffering and thoughts of bliss."** If they reach the Heaven of Pervasive Purity and become attached to the bliss they're experiencing there, they've made a mistake. They should put both bliss and suffering down, so there is neither a perception of suffering nor a perception of bliss. If they do that, they will have genuine bliss. **"Their coarse and heavy thoughts are extinguished, and they give rise to the nature of purity and blessings."** The pure nature of blessings and virtue arises. This purity of blessings is just the absence of thoughts of suffering and bliss. They have a pure reward of blessings. These beings **"are among those in the heaven of the birth of blessings."**

O2 Blessed love heaven.

Sutra:

"Those whose renunciation of these thoughts is in perfect fusion gain a purity of superior understanding. Within these unimpeded blessings they obtain a wonderful compliance that extends to the bounds of the future. They are among those in the Blessed Love Heaven.

Commentary:

"**Those whose renunciation of these thoughts** of suffering and bliss **is in perfect fusion gain a purity of superior understanding.**" When they renounce the two kinds of thoughts mentioned above, the purity of blessings arises. Now they gain a superior understanding of this purity, that is, their wisdom has greatly increased. They gain the purity of wisdom. **"Within these unimpeded blessings they obtain a wonderful compliance that extends to the bounds of the future."** There is nothing that can hinder this reward of blessings; its magnitude is too great. Out of these blessings arises the ability to constantly accord with living beings. This kind of compliance is such that,

If channeled to the east, it flows east,
If channeled to the west, it flows west,

just like a river. There is a total ease in all that one does. Everything one does is correct. One does not make any mistakes.

Everything is in accord with one's intent.
Everything one does is totally in accord
with the wishes of others.

However one goes about doing something, it is appropriate. There are no problems that arise. No matter what one does, no trouble comes from it. All the problems are resolved. That's what's meant by obtaining "a wonderful compliance that extends to the bounds of the future." This continues forever to the ends of the bounds of the

future. What are the bounds of the future? They are just that: the bounds of the future. What else is there to say? These heavenly beings **"are among those in the Blessed Love Heaven."**

O3 Abundant fruit heaven.

Sutra:

"Ananda, from that heaven there are two ways to go. Those who extend the previous thought into limitless pure light, and who perfect and clarify their blessings and virtue, cultivate and are certified to one of these dwellings. They are among those in the Abundant Fruit Heaven.

Commentary:

"**Ananda, from that heaven –** that is, from the second heaven of the fourth dhyana, the Blessed Love Heaven **– there are two ways to go**." One way leads to the Heaven of Abundant Results and the other way leads to the No-Thought Heaven. There's a fork in the road at this point. "**Those who extend the previous thought –** the state of the Blessed Love Heaven **– into limitless pure light, and who perfect and clarify their blessings and virtue, cultivate and are certified to one of these dwellings."** That is, **"They are among those in the Abundant Fruit Heaven."** Their virtuous nature is abundant and vast and their fruition is large, so they can dwell in this heaven.

O4 No thought heaven.

Sutra:

"Those who extend the previous thought into a dislike of both suffering and bliss, so that the intensity of their thought to renounce them continues without cease, will end up by totally renouncing the way. Their bodies and minds will become extinct; their thoughts will become like dead ashes. For five hundred aeons these beings will perpetuate the cause for production and extinction, being unable to discover the nature which is neither produced nor extinguished. During the first

half of these aeons they will undergo extinction; during the second half they will experience production. They are among those in the Heaven of No Thought.

Commentary:

"**Those who extend the previous thought into a dislike of both suffering and bliss, so that the intensity of their thought to renounce them continues without cease,** will lend up totally renouncing the Way. If heavenly beings in the Blessed Love Heaven previously described develop a distaste for both suffering and bliss, they will do away with them both. Their investigation of the extinction of these two – suffering and bliss – continues on and on until they **"end up by totally renouncing the way. Their bodies and minds will become extinct; their thoughts will become like dead ashes."** At this point they are cultivating the Samadhi of No Thought. **"For five hundred aeons these beings will perpetuate the cause for production and extinction, being unable to discover the nature which is neither produced nor extinguished."** They have a lifespan of five hundred aeons, but the cause they are creating is based on production and extinction. **"During the first half of these aeons they will undergo extinction."** This refers to their renunciation of both suffering and bliss. When they realize the perfection of that renunciation, such thoughts do not arise. But after two hundred and fifty aeons, they once again give rise to false thinking. **"During the second half they will experience production."** The reward of their Samadhi of No Thought is coming to an end. When the extinction ceases, they have a thought that slanders the Triple Jewel. When the production begins, marking the decline of their lifespan, when their samadhi is destroyed, they slander the Triple Jewel. What do they say? "The Buddha said that a fourth-stage Arhat has ended birth and death and will not undergo any further becoming. Now, I've already been certified to the fourth fruition, so why am I on my way to undergoing birth and death again? The Buddha must have told a lie." That's how they slander the Triple Jewel . Actually, the fourth dhyana heaven they are in is certainly not the fourth fruition of

Arhatship. It's not even at the level of the first fruition. They make the mistake of thinking that they have become fourth-stage Arhats. They get to the fourth dhyana and think it's the fourth stage of Arhatship. But they are Wrong. The Bhikshu with no Learning made this mistake. Those who go this road **"are among those in the Heaven of No Thought."**

N2 Concludes they are unmoving and have pure heat.

Sutra:

"Ananda, those who flow to these four superior levels will not be moved by any suffering or bliss in any world. Although this is not the unconditioned or the true ground of non-moving, because they still have the thought of obtaining something, their functioning is nonetheless quite advanced. This is called the Fourth Dhyana.

Commentary:

"Ananda, those who flow to these four superior levels will not be moved by any suffering or bliss in any world." Whether they experience suffering or bliss, their minds do not move. "**Although this is not the** genuine **unconditioned or the true ground of non-moving**, they are still able to control their minds and keep them from moving. But it's a forced control; they have not been certified to the higher level. That is **because they still have the thought of obtaining something.**" In the fourth dhyana they still harbor the thought of having gained something. For instance the Bhikshu with No Learning thought he had reached the fourth fruition of Arhatship. **"Their functioning is nonetheless quite advanced."** They have reached the maximum in their application of effort, given the level they are on. **"This is called the Fourth Dhyana."** These are the heavens of the fourth dhyana.

M2 The five heavens of no return.
N1 Reveals the dwelling in the sagely fruit.

Sutra:

"Beyond these, Ananda, are the five heavens of no return. For those who have completely cut off the nine categories of habits in the lower realms, neither suffering nor bliss exist, and there is no regression to the lower levels. All whose minds have achieved this renunciation dwell in these heavens together.

Commentary:

"Beyond these, Ananda, are the five heavens of no return." These upper five heavens are sometimes considered to be among the heavens of the fourth dhyana. However, these five are the dwelling places of sages, and thus differ from the heavens of the first, second, third, and fourth dhyanas. Beings who have been certified to the fruition of Arhatship reside in the Five Heavens of No Return. **"For those who have completely cut off the nine categories of habits in the lower realms, neither suffering nor bliss exist, and there is no regression to the lower levels."** The "nine categories of habits" refer to the first nine categories of the eighty-one categories of delusion of thoughts. We will not go into them in detail here. These beings do not have to return anywhere at this point. They will not regress to the lower levels. **"All whose minds have achieved this renunciation dwell in these heavens together."** A multitude of beings reach this level of renunciation and dwell together in emptiness on a cloud that shelters the earth. Those who dwell there are sages who have reached the level of the Five Heavens of No Return.

N2 The particular characteristics of the five heavens.
O1 The no affliction heaven.

Sutra:

"Ananda, those who have put an end to suffering and bliss and who do not get involved in the contention between such thoughts are among those in the Heaven of No Affliction.

Commentary:

They do not have thoughts of suffering and they do not have thoughts of bliss, and so there is no involvement in the struggle between the two. Those who don't experience this battle between suffering and bliss are "among those in the Heaven of No Affliction." The beings in this heaven don't have any afflictions at all.

O2 The no heat heaven.

Sutra:

"Those who isolate their practice, whether in movement or in restraint, investigating the baselessness of that involvement, are among those in the Heaven of No Heat.

Commentary:

"Those who isolate their practice, whether in movement or in restraint, investigating the baselessness of that involvement," are beings from the previous heaven who have progressed in their cultivation. In the first of the Five Heavens of No Return, they did not get involved in contention between thoughts of suffering and bliss. This means that they were basically devoid of such thoughts, although occasionally a little of that kind of thinking might arise. They might still get a little bit involved sometimes. But at this level, in the Heaven of No Heat, they look into the fact that such involvement lacks any foundation whatsoever, until they reach the point where they simply cannot give rise to that kind of thought or have it in mind. For those beings, such thoughts never arise. They **"are among those in the Heaven of No Heat."** They are cool and refreshed at all times.

O3 The good view heaven.

Sutra:

"Those whose vision is wonderfully perfect and clear, view the realms of the ten directions as free of defiling appearances

and devoid of all dirt and filth. They are among those in the Heaven of Good View.

Commentary:

"Those whose vision is wonderfully perfect and clear, view the realms of the ten directions as free of defiling appearances and devoid of all dirt and filth." Their vision is subtle and wonderful as well as being absolutely clear – not turbid or confused. Their view contains no defiling opinions. Their vision is said to be perfect and clear because it contains no defilement. All defiling dharmas are extinguished. Ignorance and delusions as many as dust and sand have been cleared away. These heavenly beings **"are among those in the Heaven of Good View."**

O4 The good manifestation heaven.

Sutra:

"Those whose subtle vision manifests as all their obstructions are refined away are among those in the Heaven of Good Manifestation.

Commentary:

Everything the beings in the previous heaven see is good. Now, with the manifestation of this subtle vision, everything they see is far superior to anything they have ever seen before. This heaven is a lot purer than the heavens already described. The word "refined" refers to the process of smelting, molding, and fashioning. It's like the firing done in a kiln or the Shaping done on an anvil . What is refined here is the mind and nature of a sage so that it becomes unobstructed and Comfortable in every way. These are the beings who dwell In the Heaven of Good Manifestation.

O5 The ultimate form heaven.

Sutra:

"Those who reach the ultimately subtle level come to the end of the nature of form and emptiness and enter into a boundless realm. They are among those in the Heaven of Ultimate Form.

Commentary:

“Those who reach the ultimately subtle level come to the end of the nature of form and emptiness.” “Ultimate” has the meaning of epitome or perfection. The “subtle level” refers to the detachment from desires. They reach the end of the nature of emptiness and the nature of form **“and enter into a boundless realm. They are among those in the Heaven of Ultimate Form.”** They reach the ultimate extreme of the nature of form.

N3 Concludes that those in the four dhyana heavens cannot see these gods.

Sutra:

“Ananda, those in the Four Dhyanas, and even the rulers of the gods at those four levels, can only pay their respects through having heard of the beings in the Heavens of No Return; they cannot know them or see them, just as the coarse people of the world cannot see the places where the Arhats abide in holy Way-places deep in the wild and mountainous areas.

Commentary:

“Ananda, those in the Four Dhyanas, and even the rulers of the gods at those four levels, can only pay their respects through having heard of the beings in the Heavens of No Return.” The leaders of the gods in the heavens of the four dhyanas know about the sages dwelling in the Five Heavens of No Return only through having heard about them. “**They cannot know them or see them** themselves. In the same way **the coarse people of the world cannot see the places where the Arhats abide in holy Way-places deep in the wild and mountainous areas.”** The Bodhimandas of the sages are in places where people do not go. Those who dwell in such places are great Arhats and great Bodhisattvas. Their presence is a supporting influence on the areas where they dwell. Ordinary people never see these holy beings. Although they all live in the same world, people cannot see the sages. So the text likens the Five Heavens of No Return to the sages in the remote

Way-places. The gods in the heavens of the four dhyanas don't know where the sages reside.

Sutra:

"Ananda, in these eighteen heavens are those who practice only non-involvement, and have not yet gotten rid of their shapes, as well as those who have reached the level of no return. This is called the Form Realm.

Commentary:

"Ananda, in these eighteen heavens are those who practice only non-involvement, and have not yet gotten rid of their shapes." The eighteen heavens are the three each of the first, second, and third dhyanas; the four of the fourth dhyana; and the Five Heavens of No Return. Together they comprise the heavens of the Form Realm. As to the "practice of non-involvement," the beings in each of these heavens have their own particular causes and effects regarding cultivation. They have eliminated the coarser desires and transcended that realm, but they still have their own forms. The Form Realm also includes **"those who have reached the level of no return."** However, because these heavens are inhabited by sages, they are really in a class by themselves. The text likens them to Arhats whose dwellings in the wilds are unknown to the average person. **"This is called the Form Realm."**

J3 The four places of emptiness.
K1 The fork that is other than sagehood.

Sutra:

"Furthermore, Ananda, from this summit of the form realm there are also two roads. Those who are intent upon renunciation discover wisdom. The light of their wisdom becomes perfect and penetrating, so that they can transcend the defiling realms, accomplish Arhatship, and enter the Bodhisattva Vehicle. They are among those called Great Arhats who have turned their minds around.

Commentary:

“Furthermore, Ananda, from this summit of the form realm there are also two roads.” At this point there is another fork in the road. **“Those who are intent upon renunciation discover wisdom.”** Once they practice renunciation they can uncover their wisdom. “**The light of their wisdom becomes perfect and penetrating,** so that there are no more obstructions. Then **they can transcend the defiling realms.** They can leave the Triple Realm by taking this fork in the road and **accomplish Arhatship**. They attain the fruition of Arhatship **and enter the Bodhisattva Vehicle**. These kinds of living beings **are among those called Great Arhats who have turned their minds around.**” That means they have turned from the small and come around to the great. They have turned from the Small Vehicle, and they tend toward the Great Vehicle.

K2 Listing the four heavens.
L1 Heaven of the station of boundless emptiness.

Sutra:

“Those who dwell in the thought of renunciation and who succeed in renunciation and rejection, realize that their bodies are an obstacle. If they thereupon obliterate the obstacle and enter into emptiness, they are among those at the Station of Emptiness.

Commentary:

We have finished the discussion of the four dhyanas and now begin the explanation of the four stations of emptiness. **“Those who dwell in the thought of renunciation and who succeed in renunciation and rejection, realize that their bodies are an obstacle.”** These gods accomplish renunciation of bliss and rejection of suffering. They know that physical bodies are an obstruction, and so, **“If they thereupon obliterate the obstacle and enter into emptiness, they are among those at the Station of Emptiness.”** They don’t want to be hindered by anything and so they contemplate their bodies as being just like empty space. In this

way they wipe out that obstacle. These beings then take the other road at the fork and enter the Heaven of the Station of Boundless Emptiness.

L2 Heaven of the station of boundless consciousness.

Sutra:

"For those who have eradicated all obstacles, there is neither obstruction nor extinction. Then there remains only the alaya consciousness and half of the subtle functions of the manas. These beings are among those at the Station of Boundless Consciousness.

Commentary:

"For those who have eradicated all obstacles, there is neither obstruction nor extinction." At the summit of the Four Dhyana Heavens, those who wished to progress upward felt that the body was an obstacle. So they obliterated the obstacle and entered emptiness. Now that they have advanced to the Formless Realm, there is no more hindrance of Physical form. There's no obstacle, and so there is nothing to extinguish either. **"Then there remains only the alaya consciousness and half of the subtle functions of the manas."** At this point there is no body, only a consciousness. That consciousness is the alaya, or eighth, consciousness, also known as the storehouse consciousness. The "storehouse" is actually the Treasury of the Thus Come One, but at this point it has not yet completely returned to the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, and so it is still called a consciousness. Every move you make, every word you speak, everything you do and encounter in the course of every day is stored in this consciousness. For these beings, the alaya consciousness remains, along with "half of the subtle functions of the manas." The manas is the seventh consciousness, also known as the defiling consciousness. Transformations take place in this consciousness. It is true that we say ignorance arises in the eighth consciousness, but here it is extremely close to becoming the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One and to being free of defilement. It is only when the

information stored in the eighth consciousness passes to the seventh consciousness that it becomes defiling. Now, however, even the manas is functioning only at half its capacity and so the defilement that remains is extremely subtle. **"These beings are among those at the Station of Boundless Consciousness."** They are born into the Heaven of the Station of Boundless Consciousness.

L3 Heaven of the station of nothing whatsoever.

Sutra:

"Those who have already done away with emptiness and form eradicate the conscious mind as well. In the extensive tranquility of the ten directions there is nowhere at all to go. These beings are among those at the Station of Nothing Whatsoever.

Commentary:

When they reach this level there isn't anything at all. This is really a case of:

The house is destroyed,
People are gone.
It's hard to find words to express it.

Everything is gone. **"Those who have already done away with emptiness and form** now **eradicate the conscious mind as well."** The house is destroyed, the people are gone. In the station prior to this there still was consciousness, but now consciousness is gone as well . It's hard to find words to express it. If you don't even have a consciousness, how are you going to talk? There's basically nothing that can be said, anyway. **"In the extensive tranquility of the ten directions there is nowhere at all to go."** All the worlds of the ten directions throughout the entire Dharma Realm have disappeared. A stillness pervades. There's nowhere to go. Nor is there anywhere to come to. There's no coming and no going. **"These beings are among those at the Station of Nothing Whatsoever."**

Although there's nothing whatsoever, nonetheless the nature of these beings still remains. Their nature is the same as emptiness. Therefore, the gods at the Station of Nothing Whatsoever still have a lifespan. How long is it? Sixty thousand great aeons. Since the gods' lifespan and physical height increases to such vast proportions in the realms of form and formlessness, I haven't mentioned the figures, they are too huge. I decided to wait till the end and impress you with one gigantic number. If you want to know all the numbers between, you can look them up.

This, then, is the second-to-last heaven, and the lifespan of the gods is sixty thousand great kalpas. We call it a lifespan, but actually these gods are in samadhi for that long. At the end of that time their samadhi is destroyed, and then they once again transmigrate into the other realms of existence. It's not for sure what path of rebirth they will wind up in. These are the beings in the Heaven of the Station of Nothing Whatsoever.

L4 Heaven of the station of neither thought nor non-thought.

Sutra:

"When the nature of their consciousness does not move, within extinction they exhaustively investigate, within the endless they discern the end of the nature. It is as if it were there and yet not there, as if it were ended and yet not ended. They are among those at the Station of Neither Thought nor Non-Thought.

Commentary:

This is the Heaven of Neither Thought nor Non-Thought, the highest of the heavens. The lifespan of these heavenly beings is eighty thousand great aeons. However, after enjoying that long period of heavenly blessings, they too fall back into rebirth. In the Heaven of the Station of Boundless Consciousness, the consciousness still functions occasionally, but now it doesn't move at all. "**When the nature of their consciousness does not move, within extinction they exhaustively investigate.** Ultimately even investi-

gation and all other forms of pursuing knowledge come to an end. **"Within the endless they discern the end of the nature."** "The endless" refers to the absence of anything, as just described. Within it they discern the end of the nature which is endless. When they discern this nature, however, **"it is as if it were there and yet not there, as if it were ended and yet not ended."** It seems to be gone but it isn't. **"They are among those at the Station of Neither Thought nor Non-Thought."** There is a bit of thought left, but at this station it does not function. They remain in samadhi for eighty thousand great aeons. They are the gods with the longest lifespan.

People who cultivate the Way should not give rise to thoughts. Once your mind is set in motion and thoughts arise, you will be stuck with the retribution in the future. You'll have to work it off. For example, there was an old cultivator in the past who cultivated the samadhi of neither thought nor non-thought, and he could probably have entered the Heaven of the Station of Neither Thought Nor Non-Thought. One day, as he was cultivating by the seashore and was just on the verge of entering samadhi, a fish in the water disturbed him. In the Ch'an hall, people who are incessant talkers are dubbed "machine guns." They are always able to think up reasons to interrupt others with questions and discussions which disturb the hall To create disturbances is to be a pest who gives other people trouble. In this case, it was a fish that created the disturbance. It flipped out of the water with a "plunk," and that little feat of acrobatics prevented the cultivator from entering samadhi. Unable to enter samadhi, the cultivator got angry, and he thought, "What a nuisance that fish is! I want to enter samadhi, and he comes to trouble me. I don't have any spiritual penetrations yet, but when I get them, I'm going to come back as a kingfisher and eat his species up. That's what he'll get for obstructing my practice!" Of course, since he was so angry the fish didn't dare play around with him anymore. It was scared away. Left undisturbed, the cultivator accomplished his cultivation and was born in the Heaven of the Station of Neither Thought Nor Non-Thought. However, after he enjoyed eighty thousand great aeons of residence in that heaven,

guess what happened. The retribution came ripe from that one thought of anger he'd had by the seashore that day. He fell into the animal realm and was reborn as a kingfisher. His entire existence consisted of eating fish from the sea. This continued until Shakyamuni Buddha came into the world and came to where he was to speak the Dharma for him. Only then was he able to relinquish the body of a kingfisher and become a person. He once again left the home life and cultivated the Way, and this time he was certified to the fruition of Arhatship.

Whatever you do in cultivation of the Way, then, don't get angry. Whether people are good to you or not, you should maintain thoughts of loving kindness for them, thoughts of compassion and protection. Don't feel hatred toward anyone, don't be upset by them. It won't be a problem if you perfect your cultivation and transcend the Triple World. But if you remain in the Triple World, you will have to undergo retribution for your hatred. There's a saying that 5 appropriate here:

You can move the waters of a thousand rivers,
But you can't disturb the mind of a cultivator of the Way.

To disturb a cultivator and cause him to get angry is a serious matter, and the cause and effect will ripen in the future.

K3 The rise and fall of sages and ordinary people.

Sutra:

"These beings who delve exhaustively into emptiness, but never fathom the principle of emptiness, go from the heaven of no return down this road which is a dead end to sagehood. They are among those known as dull Arhats who do not turn their minds around. Just like those in the heaven of no thought and the heavens of externalists who become engrossed in emptiness and do not want to come back, these beings are confused, prone to outflows, and ignorant. They will accordingly enter the cycle of rebirth again.

Commentary:

"These beings who delve exhaustively into emptiness, but never fathom the principle of emptiness, go from the heaven of no return down this road which is a dead end to sagehood." You'll remember that at the summit of the Form Realm the road is forked. One path leads to the great Arhats who turn their minds around. Now we've come to the end of the road which the other fork leads to – to the Arhats who do not turn their minds around. They never fathom the principle of emptiness entirely. They have cultivated, but they don't really understand; they don't have any genuine wisdom. **"They are among those known as dull Arhats who do not turn their minds around."** They don't have the wisdom of sages. They don't turn from the small and go toward the great. "Dull" means stupid and dull-witted. **"Just like those in the heaven of no thought and the heavens of externalists who become engrossed in emptiness and do not want to come back, these beings are confused, prone to outflows, and ignorant."** The beings in those heavens and the ones who pass through the four stations of emptiness and wind up at this dead end all become attached to emptiness and don't know how to return to cultivate the Way to Bodhi. They end up confused and stupid. **"They will accordingly enter the cycle of rebirth again."** In cultivation you must keep yourself in line and not go down the wrong road.

K4 Understanding the difference between ordinary people and sages.

Sutra:

"Ananda, each and every being in all these heavens is ordinary. They are still answerable for their karmic retribution. When they have answered for their debts, they must once again enter rebirth. The lords of these heavens, how ever, are all Bodhisattvas who roam in samadhi. They gradually progress in their practice and make transferences to the way cultivated by all sages.

Commentary:

"Ananda, each and every being in all these heavens is ordinary." You shouldn't think that they have succeeded in their cultivation. They are all still ordinary beings. They have not been certified to the fruition of sagehood **"They are still answerable for their karmic retribution."** Despite their long lifespans, they still must go off to repay their debts when their karma catches up with them. **"When they have answered for their debts, they must once again enter rebirth."**

"**The lords of these heavens, how ever, are all Bodhisattvas.** They are transformation-body Bodhisattvas, **who roam in samadhi. They gradually progress in their practice and make transferences to the way cultivated by all sages.**" They make transference to Bodhi, the Enlightened Way. They are certified to the fruition and join the family of sages. The Way they cultivate is the same that is cultivated by all the sages.

K5 Conclusion of those belonging to the formless realm.

Sutra:

"Ananda, these are the Four Heavens of Emptiness, where the bodies and minds of the inhabitants are extinguished. The nature of concentration emerges, and they are free of the karmic retribution of form. This final group is called the Formless Realm.

Commentary:

"Ananda, these are the Four Heavens of Emptiness." They are:

1. The Heaven of the Station of Boundless Emptiness.
2. The Heaven of the Station of Boundless Consciousness.
3. The Heaven of the Station of Nothing Whatsoever.
4. The Heaven of Neither Thought Nor Non-Thought.

This is **"where the bodies and minds of the inhabitants are extinguished. The nature of concentration emerges, and they**

are free of the karmic retribution of form.” They don’t have physical bodies, and they have no minds other than a consciousness which does not move. The nature of their samadhi-power becomes evident. “They are free of the karmic retribution of form.” They don’t have to go through that in these heavens. **“This final group is called the Formless Realm.”** This is the end of life in the Three Realms. The four stations of emptiness are the heavens of the Formless Realm. They are the last of the heavens.

I2 Reiterates and generally concludes.

Sutra:

“The beings in all of them have not understood the wonderful enlightenment of the bright mind. Their accumulation of falseness brings into being false existence in the Three Realms. Within them they falsely follow along and become submerged in the seven destinies. As pudgalas, they gather together with their own species or kind.

Commentary:

“The beings throughout the three realms just described **have not understood the wonderful enlightenment of the bright mind.”** They don’t have the wisdom to understand and become enlightened. **“Their accumulation of falseness brings into being false existence in the Three Realms.”** From the one truth, falseness arises. Ignorance is produced in the nature of wonderful True Suchness. The Three Realms are created by living beings themselves. Once **“within them they falsely follow along and become submerged in the seven destinies.”** We usually speak of the cycle of rebirth in the six paths, but here the text mentions seven. That’s because the path of the immortals is included here, having been discussed earlier in the sutra. The seven are:

1. gods,
2. asuras,
3. immortals,
4. people,

5. animals,
6. hungry ghosts,
7. hell dwellers.

They bob up and down, suddenly getting reborn in the heavens and then falling again into the hells. They go from being people to being hungry ghosts. That's what's meant by "submerged." **"As pudgalas, they gather together with their own species or kind."** "Pudgala" is a Sanskrit word that means sentient beings. "Gathering together with their own kind" means that they undergo retribution for whatever kind of karma they have created. If they are immortals, they gather together with that kind. If their reward is the heavens, then they gather together with other gods. If they are destined to be asuras, they get together with other asuras. The same applies to the other destinies.

Destiny of Asuras

H7 Destiny of asuras.
I1 A general introduction to their name and number.

Sutra:

"Furthermore, Ananda, there are four categories of asuras in the Triple Realm.

Commentary:

"Furthermore, Ananda, there are four categories of asuras." "Asura" is also a Sanskrit word. Sometimes it's translated as "non-gods." That's because some asuras have the blessings of the heavens but not the virtue of the gods. Another translation is "not upright in appearance"; however, only the male asuras are that way. The asura women are extremely beautiful. Asuras are found among beings of the four kinds of birth: womb-born, egg-born, moisture-born, and born by transformation. Each of these will now be discussed.

I2 A specific explanation of those included in this destiny.
J1 Egg-born ghosts.

Sutra:

"Those in the path of ghosts who use their strength to protect the Dharma and who can ride their spiritual

penetrations to enter into emptiness are asuras born from eggs; they belong to the destiny of ghosts.

Commentary:

"Those in the path of ghosts who use their strength to protect the Dharma and who can ride their spiritual penetrations to enter into emptiness are asuras born from eggs." Some ghosts are good and act as Dharma protectors. Kuan Ti Kung is an example. He is a great and powerful ghost. These kinds of ghosts protect and support the Triple Jewel. They can use their spiritual powers to go into emptiness. These asuras **"they belong to the destiny of ghosts."**

J2 Womb-born people.

Sutra:

"Those who have fallen in virtue and have been dismissed from the heavens dwell in places near the sun and moon. They are asuras born from wombs and belong to the destiny of humans.

Commentary:

"Those who have fallen in virtue and have been dismissed from the heavens dwell in places near the sun and moon." They started out in the heavens, but they didn't have the virtue to remain there. They fell and were thrown out into empty space. They take up residence in places close to the sun and moon. **"They are asuras born from wombs and belong to the destiny of humans."**

J3 Transformation-born gods.

Sutra:

"There are asura kings who uphold the world with a penetrating power and fearlessness. They fight for position with the Brahma Lord, the God Shakra, and the Four Heavenly Kings. These asuras come into being by transformation and belong to the destiny of gods.

Commentary:

There is another category of "**asura kings who uphold the world with a penetrating power and fearlessness.** Their strength is enormous. They can shake the entire world system. If they grasp the peak of Mt. Sumeru with their hand and push, they can topple the mountain right down. That's the kind of strength they have. With such great spiritual powers, they think they'd like to be the Great Brahma King or the Lord Shakra. So they fight for power and authority. **"They fight for position with the Brahma Lord, the God Shakra, and the Four Heavenly Kings. These asuras come into being by transformation and belong to the destiny of gods."** They use their spiritual powers to undergo this transformation.

The Lord of the asuras had a beautiful daughter who became the reason why he went to war with the God Shakra. She was an exquisite young goddess, and when Shakra laid eyes on her he went to the Lord of the asuras to ask for her hand. The asura father consented. It turned out, however, that the asura woman was extremely jealous and selfish. The Lord Shakra liked to listen to the Buddhadharma and would go regularly to hear the Dharma Masters lecture on the sutras. The asura woman noticed his absence and became jealous. She thought, "Now that he's married me, he doesn't love me anymore. I bet he's going out and having an affair." Possessed by such jealous thoughts as this, she secretly followed the Lord God one day to find out where he went. When the Lord entered the Dharma assembly and took his place, his wife observed that there were a lot of women in the gathering. This fired her jealousy even more, and with that she became visible. When Shakra saw her he asked, "What are you doing here?"

"You come here to get friendly with women and don't invite me along:" she replied in a jealous fit.

Shakra slapped her face, and she began to cry and ran home to the asura King to tell her tale. "The God Shakra is breaking the rules and always going out to find women," she reported. "When I followed him, he hit me."

Of course, when the asura King heard that, he was outraged. “We’re going to war: We’ll overthrow him and usurp the throne:” He sent out the entire company of asura soldiers and generals to join battle against Shakra. Well, guess what; the combined military might of Shakra, Brahma, and the Four Heavenly Kings could not overcome the asura troops. It was a stalemate. Finally Shakra had to go to the Buddha to ask for help. “What’s to be done?” he said. “I can’t beat these asuras.”

Shakyamuni Buddha replied, “Go back and tell all your officers and enlisted men to recite the phrase ‘Mahaprajnaparamita,’ and I guarantee that everything will turn out all right.”

Shakra did as he was told, and the asuras gave up without further fight. That’s how Shakra finally won. But these kinds of asuras are always fighting for position and authority.

J4 Moisture-born animals.

Sutra:

“Ananda, there is another, baser category of asuras. They have thoughts of the great seas and live submerged in underwater caves. During the day they roam in emptiness; at night they return to their watery realm. These asuras come into being because of moisture and belong to the destiny of animals.

Commentary:

“Ananda, there is another, baser category of asuras. They have thoughts of the great seas and live submerged in underwater caves.” These asuras belong to the animal realm. Dragons and the like are examples. Since they think so much about the sea, they end up living in it. **“During the day they roam in emptiness; at night they return to their watery realm.”** They go back to their underwater caves in the evening. **“These asuras come into being because of moisture and belong to the destiny of animals.”**

F3 Concludes they are false and exhorts him to be apart from them.
G1 Brings up the medicine and the sickness.
H1 Generally mentions the false sickness.

Sutra:

"Ananda, so it is that when the seven destinies of hell-dwellers, hungry ghosts, animals, people, spiritual immortals, gods, and asuras are investigated in detail, they are all found to be murky and embroiled in conditioned existence. Their births come from false thoughts. Their subsequent karma comes from false thoughts. Within the wonderful perfection of the fundamental mind that is without any doing, they are like strange flowers in space, for there is basically nothing to be attached to; they are entirely vain and false, and they have no source or beginning.

Commentary:

"Ananda, so it is that when the seven destinies of hell-dwellers, hungry ghosts, animals, people, spiritual immortals, gods, and asuras are investigated in detail, they are all found to be murky and embroiled in conditioned existence." They all still have some form of appearance. **"Their births come from false thoughts. Their subsequent karma comes from false thoughts,"** and it leads them into their next rebirth. **"Within the wonderful perfection of the fundamental mind that is without any doing, they are like strange flowers in space, for there is basically nothing to be attached to."** The seven destinies are like illusory flowers in emptiness; they are nothing to cling to. **"They are entirely vain and false, and they have no source or beginning."**

H2 Points out the deep root of the illness.

Sutra:

"Ananda, these living beings, who do not recognize the fundamental mind, all undergo rebirth for limitless kalpas. They do not attain true purity, because they keep getting involved in killing, stealing, and lust, or because they counter

them and are born according to their not killing, not stealing, and lack of lust. If these three karmas are present in them, they are born among the troops of ghosts. If they are free of these three karmas, they are born in the destiny of gods. The incessant fluctuation between the presence and absence of these karmas gives rise to the cycle of rebirth.

Commentary:

“**Ananda, these living beings** in the seven destinies, **who do not recognize the fundamental mind, all undergo rebirth for limitless kalpas.**” They don’t know of the wonderful perfection of the fundamental mind which is without any doing, and so they keep having to undergo birth in the six paths. They are born and then die; they die and then are reborn. In this life they’re a cow, and in the next life they’re a horse, and maybe in the life following that they become a person. It’s a continuing cycle. How long does it go on? There’s no way to calculate how many aeons one passes through in this way. **“They do not attain true purity.”** They never uncover their inherent pure substance. Why? **“Because they keep getting involved in killing, stealing, and lust.”** They get all hung up in them and can’t stop their involvement. **“Or** it is **because they counter** the three karmas of killing, stealing, and lust **and are born according to their not killing, not stealing, and lack of lust. If these three karmas are present in them, they are born among the troops of ghosts.”** If they commit acts of killing, stealing and lust, they go to the realm of ghosts where all their friends and relatives are also ghosts. **“If they are free of these three karmas, they are born in the destiny of gods. The incessant fluctuation between the presence and absence of these karmas gives rise to the cycle of rebirth.”** The continuous battle between creating those karmas and not creating them goes on and on. Sometimes they create them, sometimes they don’t. That’s the nature of rebirth.

H3 Decides on a medicine that can get rid of it.

Sutra:

"For those who make the wonderful discovery of samadhi, neither the presence nor the absence of these karmas exists in that magnificent, eternal stillness; even their non-existence is done away with. Since the lack of killing, stealing, and lust is non-existent, how could there be actual involvement in deeds of killing, stealing, and lust?

Commentary:

"For those who make the wonderful discovery of samadhi, neither the presence nor the absence of these karmas exists in that magnificent, eternal stillness." Some beings in the seven destinies can attain wonderful and genuine samadhi power. That refers to the Great Shurangama Samadhi. They return the hearing to hear the self-nature, and the nature accomplishes the unsurpassed Way. They cultivate the perfect penetration of the organ of the ear and attain true and proper samadhi-power. If the three karmas are present, one goes into the three evil destinies of hell dwellers, hungry ghosts, and animals. If they are absent, one can attain rebirth among humans, immortals, gods, or asuras. But in this samadhi, those karmas are neither present nor absent; **"even their non-existence is done away with."** The absence of divisions into the three evil destinies and the four good paths is dispensed with as well. **"Since the lack of killing, stealing, and lust is non-existent, how could there be actual involvement in deeds of killing, stealing, and lust?"** If they fundamentally don't exist, how could there be involvement in those acts of karma? How could such karma actually be created? It isn't.

G2 Collective and individual karma are both false.

Sutra:

"Ananda, those who do not cut off the three karmas each have their own private share. Because each has a private share, private shares come to be accumulated, making collective

portions. Their location is not arbitrary, yet they themselves are falsely produced. Since they are produced from falseness, they are basically without a cause, and thus they cannot be traced precisely.

Commentary:

"Ananda, those who do not cut off the three karmas each have their own private share." Every creature that does not sever the three karmas of killing, stealing, and lust creates its own individual share of karma. **"Because each has a private share, private shares come to be accumulated, making collective portions. Their location is not arbitrary."** When beings create similar kinds of individual karma, they will undergo similar retributions; this is called the collective portion. It's not a random coincidence; it's not an arbitrary circumstance. However, though it seems to be precise, that precision is itself a result of falseness. Its source is false to begin with, and so the text says, "**yet they themselves –** the individual shares and collective portions **– are falsely produced. Since they are produced from falseness, they are basically without a cause."** The falseness is insubstantial. Falseness has no seed. It is vain and empty and not actual. **"Thus they cannot be traced precisely."** You can search but you cannot find the root. They arise falsely and just as falsely cease to be. You may be determined to find their source, but it doesn't exist. They are like a person's shadow. It's only a shadow, and you won't succeed in finding its source. You may say that its source is the body, but the appearance of the shadow is not the body itself. The shadow is merely an illusion.

G3 Likeness and difference both false.

Sutra:

"You should warn cultivators that they must get rid of these three delusions if they want to cultivate Bodhi. If they do not put an end to these three delusions, then even the spiritual penetrations they may attain are merely a worldly, conditioned

function. If they do not extinguish these habits, they will fall into the path of demons.

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha calls to Ananda, **"You should warn cultivators that they must get rid of these three delusions if they want to cultivate Bodhi."** The "three delusions" here are the three karmas of killing, stealing, and lust. They are called "delusions" here because the karma arises from delusion. If one were not confused and deluded, the karma would not be created. **"If they do not put an end to these three delusions" –** that is, if there is even the tiniest bit of any of these three delusions in your makeup – a hair's breadth of killing, stealing, or lust that you don't get rid of – **"then even the spiritual penetrations they may attain are merely a worldly, conditioned function."** Perhaps they may get a bit of spiritual power or a small amount of wisdom, but even that cannot be considered to be unconditioned spiritual penetration. It resides in form and appearance and depends upon an intent in order to function. It is spiritual penetration which is attached to appearances. **"If they do not extinguish these habits, they will fall into the path of demons."** If the habits of killing, stealing, and lust are not brought to a stop, you will sink into the demonic paths in the future.

Now you see why I say that such-and-such a cultivator is a demon king. He does not observe precepts regarding killing, stealing, or lust. If one is like that, how can one obtain genuine wisdom? It's impossible.

Sutra:

"Although they wish to cast out the false, they become doubly deceptive instead. The Thus Come One says that such beings are pitiful. You have created this falseness yourself; it is not the fault of Bodhi.

Commentary:

"Although they wish to cast out the false, they become doubly deceptive instead." They add falseness to falseness, falsehood to falsehood. They start out by telling a lie, by speaking incorrectly. But afterwards they say that they didn't lie, and that's another lie. If you tell a lie, there's no use in arguing. Admit it and then it's just one lie. But someone who denies the lie he told ends up by telling two. In this way he increases his offenses. "**The Thus Come One says that such beings are pitiful.** People who never do things properly are really pathetic. **You have created this falseness yourself; it is not the fault of Bodhi.**" All this false delusion and karma is something that you brought into being. There's no fault on the part of Bodhi. Therefore, you can't say, "If we were all Buddhas how come we gave rise to falseness?" You make a mistake if you talk like that.

F4 Decides the deviant and proper.

Sutra:

"An explanation such as this is proper speech. Any other explanation is the speech of demon kings."

Commentary:

"An explanation such as this is proper speech." If you talk in this way, you are in accord with the Buddhadharma. **"Any other explanation is the speech of demon kings."** If the explanation is not along these lines, you can know it's a demon king talking. You should make the distinction clearly. The dharma spoken by demon kings is based on falseness. For instance, he knows about a particular situation but says he doesn't know. That's lying. Cultivators should know that the straight mind is the Bodhimanda. Be straightforward in all situations. Don't be deceptive.

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When Buddhism first came to China from India, one of the most important tasks required for its establishment was the translation of the Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Chinese. This work involved a great many people, such as the renowned monk National Master Kumarajiva (fifth century), who led an assembly of over 800 people to work on the translation of the Tripitaka (Buddhist canon) for over a decade. Because of the work of individuals such as these, nearly the entire Buddhist Tripitaka of over a thousand texts exists to the present day in Chinese.

Now the banner of the Buddha's Teachings is being firmly planted in Western soil, and the same translation work is being done from Chinese into English. Since 1970, the Buddhist Text Translation Society (BTTS) has been making a paramount contribution toward this goal. Aware that the Buddhist Tripitaka is a work of such magnitude that its translation could never be entrusted to a single person, the BTTS, emulating the translation assemblies of ancient times, does not publish a work until it has passed through four committees for primary translation, revision, editing, and certification. The leaders of these committees are Bhikshus (monks) and Bhikshunis (nuns) who have devoted their lives to the study and practice of the Buddha's teachings. For this reason, all of the works of the BTTS put an emphasis on what the principles of the Buddha's teachings mean in terms of actual practice and not simply hypothetical conjecture.

The translations of canonical works by the Buddhist Text Translation Society are accompanied by extensive commentaries by the Venerable Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua.

BTTS Publications

Buddhist Sutras. Amitabha Sutra, Dharma Flower (Lotus) Sutra, Flower Adornment (Avatamsaka) Sutra, Heart Sutra & Verses without a Stand, Shurangama Sutra, Sixth Patriarch Sutra, Sutra in Forty-two Sections, Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva, Vajra Prajna Paramita (Diamond) Sutra.

Commentarial Literature. Buddha Root Farm, City of 10000 Buddhas Recitation Handbook, Filiality: The Human Source, Herein Lies the Treasure-trove, Listen to Yourself Think Everything Over, Shastra on the Door to Understanding the Hundred Dharmas, Song of Enlightenment, The Ten Dharma Realms Are Not beyond a Single Thought, Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma, Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma during the 1993 Trip to Taiwan, Water Mirror Reflecting Heaven.

Biographical. In Memory of the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua, Pictorial Biography of the Venerable Master Hsü Yün, Records of High Sanghans, Records of the Life of the Venerable Master Hsüan Hua, Three Steps One Bow, World Peace Gathering, News from True Cultivators, Open Your Eyes Take a Look at the World, With One Heart Bowing to the City of 10000 Buddhas.

Children's Books. Cherishing Life, Human Roots: Buddhist Stories for Young Readers.

Musics, Novels and Brochures. Songs for Awakening, Awakening, The Three Cart Patriarch, City of 10000 Buddhas Color Brochure, Celebrisi's Journey, Heng Ch'au's Journal.

The Buddhist Monthly–Vajra Bodhi Sea is a monthly journal of orthodox Buddhism which has been published by the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, formerly known as the Sino-American Buddhist Association, since 1970. Each issue contains the most recent translations of the Buddhist canon by the Buddhist Text Translation Society. Also included in each issue are a biography of a great Patriarch of Buddhism from the ancient past, sketches of the lives of contemporary monastics and lay-followers around the world, articles on practice, and other material. The journal is bilingual, Chinese and English

Please visit our web-site at **`www.bttsonline.org`** for the latest publications and for ordering information.

The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association

Mission

The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association (formerly the Sino-American Buddhist Association) was founded by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua in the United States of America in 1959. Taking the Dharma Realm as its scope, the Association aims to disseminate the genuine teachings of the Buddha throughout the world. The Association is dedicated to translating the Buddhist canon, propagating the Orthodox Dharma, promoting ethical education, and bringing benefit and happiness to all beings. Its hope is that individuals, families, the society, the nation, and the entire world will, under the transforming influence of the Buddhadharma, gradually reach the state of ultimate truth and goodness.

The Founder

The Venerable Master, whose names were An Tse and To Lun, received the Dharma name Hsuan Hua and the transmission of Dharma from Venerable Master Hsu Yun in the lineage of the Wei Yang Sect. He was born in Manchuria, China, at the beginning of the century. At nineteen, he entered the monastic order and dwelt in a hut by his mother's grave to practice filial piety. He meditated, studied the teachings, ate only one meal a day, and slept sitting up. In 1948 he went to Hong Kong, where he established the Buddhist Lecture Hall and other Way-places. In 1962 he brought the Proper Dharma to the West, lecturing on several dozen Mahayana Sutras in the United States. Over the years, the Master established more than twenty monasteries of Proper Dharma under the auspices of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association and the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. He also founded centers for the translation of the Buddhist canon and for education to spread the influence of the Dharma in the East and West. The Master manifested the stillness in the United States in 1995. Through his lifelong, selfless dedication to teaching living beings with wisdom and compassion, he influenced countless people to change their faults and to walk upon the pure, bright path to enlightenment.

Dharma Propagation, Buddhist Text Translation, and Education

The Venerable Master Hua's three great vows after leaving the home-life were (1) to propagate the Dharma, (2) to translate the Buddhist Canon, and (3) to promote education. In order to make these vows a reality, the Venerable Master based himself on the Three Principles and the Six Guidelines. Courageously facing every hardship, he founded monasteries, schools, and centers in the West, drawing in living beings and teaching them on a vast scale. Over the years, he founded the following institutions:

The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas and Its Branches

In propagating the Proper Dharma, the Venerable Master not only trained people but also founded Way-places where the Dharma wheel could turn and living beings could be saved. He wanted to provide cultivators with pure places to practice in accord with the Buddha's regulations. Over the years, he founded many Way-places of Proper Dharma. In the United States and Canada, these include the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas; Gold Mountain Monastery; Gold Sage Monastery; Gold Wheel Monastery; Gold Summit Monastery; Gold Buddha Monastery; Avatamsaka Monastery; Long Beach Monastery; the City of the Dharma Realm; Berkeley Buddhist Monastery; Avatamsaka Hermitage; and Blessings, Prosperity, and Longevity Monastery. In Taiwan, there are the Dharma Realm Buddhist Books Distribution Association, Dharma Realm Monastery, and Amitabha Monastery. In Malaysia, there are Zi Yun Dong Monastery, Deng Bi An Monastery, and Lotus Vihara. In Hong Kong, there are the Buddhist Lecture Hall and Cixing Monastery.

Purchased in 1974, the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is the hub of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association. The City is located in Talmage, Mendocino County, California, 110 miles north of San Francisco. Eighty of the 488 acres of land are in active use. The remaining acreage consists of meadows, orchards, and woods. With over seventy large buildings containing over 2,000 rooms, blessed with serenity and fresh, clean air, it is the first large Buddhist monastic community in the United States. It is also an international center for the Proper Dharma.

Although the Venerable Master Hua was the Ninth Patriarch in the Weiyang Sect of the Chan School, the monasteries he founded emphasize all of the five main practices of Mahayana Buddhism (Chan meditation, Pure Land,

esoteric, Vinaya (moral discipline), and doctrinal studies). This accords with the Buddha's words: "The Dharma is level and equal, with no high or low." At the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, the rules of purity are rigorously observed. Residents of the City strive to regulate their own conduct and to cultivate with vigor. Taking refuge in the Proper Dharma, they lead pure and selfless lives, and attain peace in body and mind. The Sutras are expounded and the Dharma wheel is turned daily. Residents dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to making Buddhism flourish. Monks and nuns in all the monasteries take one meal a day, always wear their precept sash, and follow the Three Principles:

Freezing, we do not scheme.
Starving, we do not beg.
Dying of poverty, we ask for nothing.
According with conditions, we do not change.
Not changing, we accord with conditions.
We adhere firmly to our three great principles.
We renounce our lives to do the Buddha's work.
We take the responsibility to mold our own destinies.
We rectify our lives to fulfill the Sanghan's role.
Encountering specific matters,
we understand the principles.
Understanding the principles,
we apply them in specific matters.
We carry on the single pulse of
the Patriarchs' mind-transmission.

The monasteries also follow the Six Guidelines: not contending, not being greedy, not seeking, not being selfish, not pursuing personal advantage, and not lying.

International Translation Institute

The Venerable Master vowed to translate the Buddhist Canon (Tripitaka) into Western languages so that it would be widely accessible throughout the world. In 1973, he founded the International Translation Institute on Washington Street in San Francisco for the purpose of translating Buddhist scriptures into English and other languages. In 1977, the Institute was merged into Dharma Realm Buddhist University as the Institute for the Translation of Buddhist Texts. In 1991, the Venerable Master purchased a large building in

Burlingame (south of San Francisco) and established the International Translation Institute there for the purpose of translating and publishing Buddhist texts. To date, in addition to publishing over one hundred volumes of Buddhist texts in Chinese, the Association has published more than one hundred volumes of English, French, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Japanese translations of Buddhist texts, as well as bilingual (Chinese and English) editions. Audio and video tapes also continue to be produced. The monthly journal Vajra Bodhi Sea, which has been in circulation for nearly thirty years, has been published in bilingual (Chinese and English) format in recent years.

In the past, the difficult and vast mission of translating the Buddhist canon in China was sponsored and supported by the emperors and kings themselves. In our time, the Venerable Master encouraged his disciples to cooperatively shoulder this heavy responsibility, producing books and audio tapes and using the medium of language to turn the wheel of Proper Dharma and do the great work of the Buddha. All those who aspire to devote themselves to this work of sages should uphold the Eight Guidelines of the International Translation Institute:

1. One must free oneself from the motives of personal fame and profit.
2. One must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.
3. One must refrain from aggrandizing one's work and denigrating that of others.
4. One must not establish oneself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with one's fault-finding.
5. One must take the Buddha-mind as one's own mind.
6. One must use the wisdom of Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles.
7. One must request Virtuous Elders of the ten directions to certify one's translations.
8. One must endeavor to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

These are the Venerable Master's vows, and participants in the work of translation should strive to realize them.

Instilling Goodness Elementary School, Developing Virtue Secondary School, Dharma Realm Buddhist University

"Education is the best national defense." The Venerable Master Hua saw clearly that in order to save the world, it is essential to promote good education. If we want to save the world, we have to bring about a complete change in people's minds and guide them to cast out unwholesomeness and to pursue goodness. To this end the Master founded Instilling Goodness Elementary School in 1974, and Developing Virtue Secondary School and Dharma Realm Buddhist University in 1976.

In an education embodying the spirit of Buddhism, the elementary school teaches students to be filial to parents, the secondary school teaches students to be good citizens, and the university teaches such virtues as humaneness and righteousness. Instilling Goodness Elementary School and Developing Virtue Secondary School combine the best of contemporary and traditional methods and of Western and Eastern cultures. They emphasize moral virtue and spiritual development, and aim to guide students to become good and capable citizens who will benefit humankind. The schools offer a bilingual (Chinese/English) program where boys and girls study separately. In addition to standard academic courses, the curriculum includes ethics, meditation, Buddhist studies, and so on, giving students a foundation in virtue and guiding them to understand themselves and explore the truths of the universe. Branches of the schools (Sunday schools) have been established at branch monasteries with the aim of propagating filial piety and ethical education.

Dharma Realm Buddhist University, whose curriculum focuses on the Proper Dharma, does not merely transmit academic knowledge. It emphasizes a foundation in virtue, which expands into the study of how to help all living beings discover their inherent nature. Thus, Dharma Realm Buddhist University advocates a spirit of shared inquiry and free exchange of ideas, encouraging students to study various canonical texts and use different experiences and learning styles to tap their inherent wisdom and fathom the meanings of those texts. Students are encouraged to practice the principles they have understood and apply the Buddhadharma in their lives, thereby nurturing their wisdom and virtue. The University aims to produce outstanding individuals of high moral character who will be able to bring benefit to all sentient beings.

Sangha and Laity Training Programs

In the Dharma-ending Age, in both Eastern and Western societies there are very few monasteries that actually practice the Buddha’s regulations and strictly uphold the precepts. Teachers with genuine wisdom and understanding, capable of guiding those who aspire to pursue careers in Buddhism, are very rare. The Venerable Master founded the Sangha and Laity Training Programs in 1982 with the goals of raising the caliber of the Sangha, perpetuating the Proper Dharma, providing professional training for Buddhists around the world on both practical and theoretical levels, and transmitting the wisdom of the Buddha.

The Sangha Training Program gives monastics a solid foundation in Buddhist studies and practice, training them in the practical affairs of Buddhism and Sangha management. After graduation, students will be able to assume various responsibilities related to Buddhism in monasteries, institutions, and other settings. The program emphasizes a thorough knowledge of Buddhism, under-standing of the scriptures, earnest cultivation, strict observance of precepts, and the development of a virtuous character, so that students will be able to propagate the Proper Dharma and perpetuate the Buddha’s wisdom. The Laity Training Program offers courses to help laypeople develop correct views, study and practice the teachings, and understand monastic regulations and ceremonies, so that they will be able to contribute their abilities in Buddhist organizations.

Let Us Go Forward Together

In this Dharma-ending Age when the world is becoming increasingly dangerous and evil, the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, in consonance with its guiding principles, opens the doors of its monasteries and centers to those of all religions and nationalities. Anyone who is devoted to humaneness, righteousness, virtue, and the pursuit of truth, and who wishes to understand him or herself and help humankind, is welcome to come study and practice with us. May we together bring benefit and happiness to all living beings.

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31 Wong Nei Chong Road, Top Floor Happy Valley,
Hong Kong, China
Tel/Fax: 2572-7644

Verse of Transference

May the merit and virtue accrued from this work,
Adorn the Buddha's Pure Lands,
Repaying four kinds of kindness above,
And aiding those suffering in the paths below.

May those who see and hear of this,
All bring forth the resolve for Bodhi,
And when this retribution body is over,
Be born together in ultimate bliss.

Dharma Protector Wei T’o Bodhisattva

The Shurangama Sutra

The Shurangama Sutra

Volume Eight

a simple explanation by the

Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

English translation by the
Buddhist Text Translation Society

Buddhist Text Translation Society
Dharma Realm Buddhist University
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Introduction

This is the eight and last volume of the *Shurangama Sutra*, with commentaries from the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua.

The Buddha appears to be finished with the sermon as he prepares to leave, but then a compassionate afterthought makes him resume his Dharma seat. Having given Ananda and the great assembly a precise and detailed account of the methods of cultivation, the Buddha was concerned that if cultivators were not equipped with the knowledge of spotting subtle demonic states that can happen during the cultivation of samadhi, they may be swayed and turned into demonic beings themselves.

In “The Origin of Demonic States”, the Buddha states clearly that samadhi is the main cause for the demons’ unrest. The demons then will attempt to confuse the good cultivator. If the good cultivator recognizes the situation and remains unattached, then the cultivator has not erred. However, if the cultivator is confused by the state, he or she will then fall under the spell of the demons.

The Buddha then proceeds to list and explain the ten demonic states that can occur for each skandhic realm: “The Form Skandha”, “The Feeling Skandha”, “The Thinking Skandha”, “The Formations Skandha” and “The Consciousness Skandha”, making fifty in all. The Buddha relates exactly what the cultivator might

experience at each of these fifty states, and warns them to remain unattached and unconfused.

In “Concluding Instructions”, the Buddha tells that by relying on this dharma-door, Buddhas of the past have attained enlightenment. The Buddha again reiterates that if the cultivator recognizes a demonic-state and remains unconfused and unattached, then the demon will be powerless.

In “The Arising and Cessation of the Five Skandhas”, Ananda requests further explanation for the arisal and cessation of the five skandhas. The Buddha then instructs that the five skandhas arise solely from false thinking alone, and will also cessate with the ending of false thinking. The cessation of false thinking can only be achieved if the six sense faculties are united and function interchangeably.

Finally, the Buddha exhorts all to propagate the teachings in “Exhortation to Propagate the Sutra”, so that living beings of the present and future will derive limitless benefit.

Foreword

For over a thousand years the *Shurangama Sutra* has been held in great esteem in the Mahayana countries of East Asia. In China the Sutra was ranked in popularity and importance with the *Lotus*, *Avatamsaka* and *Prajna Paramita* Sutras; it was also accorded imperial favor.

One major reason for the importance of the Sutra is its final section, presented in this volume, on fifty deviant mental states associated with the Five Skandhas; ten states are described for each of the skandhas. For each state a description is given of the mental phenomena experienced by the practitioner, the causes of the phenomena and the difficulties which arise from attachment to the phenomena and misinterpretation of them. In essence what is presented is both a unique method of cataloguing and classifying spiritual experience and an indication of causal factors involved in the experience of the phenomena. Although the fifty states presented are by no means exhaustive, the approach taken has the potential of offering a framework for the classification of all spiritual experience, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist.

An important causal theme of the Sutra that reaches its full development in this section is the relation of the experience of the demonic to failure to observe the guidelines of the moral precepts. Thus we find a link between this particular section and the Aiding Practices of the Bodhimanda described in volume six. There the

elimination of lust, killing, stealing and false speech is presented as a prerequisite for correct meditational progress. In this volume the consequences of the failure to completely eliminate them are presented in terms of wrong views and encounters with demonic states, both internal and external.

The Sutra's particularly clear and graphic exposure of wrong practice, wrong views, the wrong use of spiritual powers, and the deceptions of deviant spiritual teachers is probably one of the major factors involved in the perennial attacks on its authenticity. It is clear that the types of people it criticizes have certainly been threatened by it, and in order to preserve their own authority and views have attacked the Sutra. Unfortunately this primary motivation for discrediting the Sutra has been ignored by the modern Buddhist scholarly community. It is not, however, difficult to see why this is the case.

To examine this dimension of discourse would mean plunging into the "subjective" realm of values, that is, the Dharmic evaluation of the correctness of various historical schools and trends. For example, not in this volume but in the above mentioned one, the Buddha proclaims:

> *How can thieves put on my robes and sell the Thus Come One, saying that all manner of karma one creates is just the Buddhadharma? They slander those who have left the home-life and regard Bhikshus who have taken complete precepts as belonging to the path of the Small Vehicle. Because of such doubts and misjudgements, limitless beings fall into the unintermittent hell.*

Students of Buddhist history will have no difficulty identifying those for whom such a statement would be extremely uncomfortable. The present volume profiles in vivid detail deviant experiences, claims and behaviors on the part of so-called Buddhist teachers in such a way as to make it an embarrassment and threat to many, including both historical and contemporary figures.

This volume of the Sutra cannot be dismissed as a narrow sectarian document. Its classification of non-Buddhist Indian religious traditions, through its framework of interpretation of meditational states, attributes to many of their founders very high states of consciousness and accords them unusual respect.

The primary importance of this volume is as unique and intensely valuable guide for Buddhist practitioners. Herein lies the value of the commentary of the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua, which accompanies the Sutra text. His erudition, wisdom and personal experience help both to bring to life the text and to illuminate its practical use and current revelance.

One cannot underestimate the importance of the publication of this section of the sutra with the accompanying commentary. It is an excellent resource for the English-speaking Buddhist world in the quest for proper understanding of Buddhism. Careful study of it will lead to greater insight into one's spiritual experiences and those of others. It is also an invaluable aid to avoiding the pitfalls of association with false gurus and so-called spiritual masters, many of whom have achieved great prominence in the contemporary spiritual scene.

Ronald Epstein
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January 1, 1996.

User's Guide

to the Shurangama Sutra series

Because of the length of the *Shurangama Sutra*, and the need to provide aid to various readers, the Sutra has been compiled into a series of 9 books: the "Sutra Text and Suppliments", and the remaining Volumes one to eight.

The "Sutra Text and Suppliments" contains:

1. the entire Sutra text, which is in excess of 2700 paragraphs;
2. the entire outline, which contains 1676 entries;
3. and a master index, which has index references for both the "Sutra Text and Suppliments" and the eight volumes.

Volumes one to eight contain:

1. the Sutra text, with commentaries;
2. the local outline entries;
3. and a local index.

Readers who wish to read or recite the Sutra in its entirety will find the "Sutra Text and Suppliments" very useful.

Those who wish to deeply study the Sutra with its commentaries will find volumes one to eight indispensable.

Exhortation to Protect and Propagate

by Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua

Within Buddhism, there are very many important sutras. However, the most important Sutra is the *Shurangama Sutra*. If there are places which have the *Shurangama Sutra*, then the Proper Dharma dwells in the world. If there is no *Shurangama Sutra*, then the Dharma Ending Age appears. Therefore, we Buddhist disciples, each and every one, must bring our strength, must bring our blood, and must bring our sweat to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*. In the *Sutra of the Ultimate Extinction of the Dharma*, it says very, very clearly that in the Dharma Ending Age, the *Shurangama Sutra* is the first to disappear, and the rest of the sutras disappear after it. If the *Shurangama Sutra* does not disappear, then the Proper Dharma Age is present. Because of that, we Buddhist disciples must use our lives to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*, must use vows and resolution to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*, and cause the *Shurangama Sutra* to be known far and wide, reaching every nook and cranny, reaching into each and every dust-mote, reaching out to the exhaustion of empty space and of the Dharma Realm. If we can do that, then there will be a time of Proper Dharma radiating great light.

Why would the *Shurangama Sutra* be destroyed? It is because it is too true. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's true body. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's sharira. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's true and actual stupa and shrine. Therefore, because

the *Shurangama Sutra* is so true, all the demon kings use all kinds of methods to destroy the *Shurangama Sutra*. They begin by starting rumors, saying that the *Shurangama Sutra* is phony. Why do they say the *Shurangama Sutra* is phony? It is because the *Shurangama Sutra* speaks too truly, especially in the sections on The Four Decisive Deeds, the Twenty-five Sages Describing Perfect Penetration, and the States of the Fifty Skandha Demons. Those of off-center persuasions and externally-oriented ways, weird demons and strange freaks, are unable to stand it. Consequently there are a good many senseless people who claim that the *Shurangama Sutra* is a forgery.

Now, the principles set forth in the *Shurangama Sutra* are on the one hand proper, and on the other in accord with principle, and the weird demons and strange freaks, those in various cults and sects, all cannot hide away their forms. Most senseless people, in particular unwise scholars and garbage-collecting professors "Tread upon the holy writ." With their extremely scant and partial understanding, they are confused and unclear, lacking real erudition and true and actual wisdom. That is why they falsely criticize. We who study the Buddhadharma should very deeply be aware of these circumstances. Therefore, wherever we go, we should bring up the *Shurangama Sutra*. Wherever we go, we should propagate the *Shurangama Sutra*. Wherever we go, we should introduce the *Shurangama Sutra* to people. Why is that? It is because we wish to cause the Proper Dharma long to dwell in the world.

If the *Shurangama Sutra* is regarded as true, then there is no problem. To verify its truth, let me say that if the *Shurangama Sutra* were phony, then I would willingly fall into the hells forever through all eternity—for being unable to recognize the Buddhadharma—for mistaking the false for true. If the *Shurangama Sutra* is true, then life after life in every time I make the vow to propagate the Great Dharma of the Shurangama, that I shall in every time and every place propagate the true principles of the Shurangama.

Everyone should pay attention to the following point. How could the *Shurangama Sutra* not have been spoken by the Buddha? No one else could have spoken the *Shurangama Sutra*. And so I hope that all those people who make senseless accusations will wake up fast and stop creating the causes for suffering in the Hell of Pulling Out Tongues. No matter who the scholar is, no matter what country students of the Buddhadharma are from, all should quickly mend their ways, admit their mistakes, and manage to change. There is no greater good than that. I can then say that all who look at the *Shurangama Sutra*, all who listen to the *Shurangama Sutra*, and all who investigate the *Shurangama Sutra*, will very quickly accomplish Buddhahood.

Composed by Gold Mountain Shramana Tripitaka Master Hua
Translated by Bhikshuni Heng Hsien
Reviewed by Shramanerika Heng Wen

The Eight Guidelines

of the Buddhist Text Translation Society

1. A volunteer must free him/herself from the motives of personal fame and profit.
2. A volunteer must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.
3. A volunteer must refrain from aggrandizing his/her work and denigrating that of others.
4. A volunteer must not establish him/herself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with his or her fault-finding.
5. A volunteer must take the Buddha-mind as his/her own mind.
6. A volunteer must use the wisdom of Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles.
7. A volunteer must request Virtuous Elders in the ten directions to certify his/her translations.
8. A volunteer must endeavour to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

Outline

of the Shurangama Sutra

The outline for the Shurangama Sutra was compiled by Dharma Master Yuan Ying, which categorizes the various parts of the Sutra text consisting of over 2,700 paragraphs to 1,676 entries.

These entries are presented in the form of a tree-like structure, dividing the various parts of the Sutra text into groups, those groupings being sub-divided further and further, thus providing a detailed break-down of the entire text.

Though the outline is not a prerequisite to reading the Sutra text and the accompanying commentaries, it serves as a useful tool for students of the Way who wish to deeply study the Sutra. Without this outline, students may find it difficult to refer to specific parts of the text.

Because of the size of the outline (and the Sutra), only outline entries which pertain to the Sutra text contained within this book is included.

For the outline of the entire Sutra, please refer to the “Sutra Text and Suppliments”, where the entire sutra text, outline, and index entries are all combined into one single volume.

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釋迦牟尼文佛

Namo Original Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha

Verse for Opening a Sutra

The unsurpassed, profound, and wonderful Dharma,
Is difficult to encounter in hundreds of millions of eons,
I now see and hear it, receive and uphold it,
And I vow to fathom the Tathagata's true meaning.

CHAPTER 1

The Origin of Demonic States

D2 Identifying the five demons so cultivators can recognize them and avoid failing.
E1 The demonic states of the five skandhas are spoken without request.
F1 Everyone should recognize these demonic states.
G1 Final true and unending compassion.

Sutra:

At that time, the Tathagata was preparing to leave the Dharma seat. From the lion throne, he extended his hand and placed it on a small table wrought of the seven precious things. But then he turned his body, which was the color of purple golden mountains, and leaned back, saying to everyone in the assembly and to Ananda: "Those of you with More to Learn, those Enlightened by Conditions, and those who are Hearers have now turned your minds to pursue the attainment of supreme Bodhi the unsurpassed, wonderful enlightenment. I have already taught you the true method of cultivation.

Commentary:

At that time, the Tathagata was preparing to leave the Dharma seat, since he had almost finished speaking the *Shurangama Sutra*. **From the lion throne, he reached his hand out and placed it on a small table wrought of the seven precious things.** The Buddha was on his Dharma seat, the lion throne. The

Buddha's speaking of the Dharma is like a lion's roar. When a lion roars, all the animals are frightened. That's why the Buddha's Dharma seat is called the lion throne. The small table in front of the Buddha was made of and adorned with the seven precious things.

But then he turned his body, which was the color of purple golden mountains, and leaned back. The Buddha's body is like a purple golden mountain; its brightness shines everywhere. He leaned on the small table again to speak the Dharma, **saying to everyone in the assembly and to Ananda: Those of you with More to Learn…** Before certifying to the fourth stage of Arhatship, one is in the position of having More to Learn. **Those Enlightened by Conditions and those who are Hearers –** those who become enlightened through cultivating the Twelve Links of Conditioned Co-production and those Hearers who become enlightened through cultivating the Dharma of the Four Noble Truths **have now turned your minds to pursue the attainment of supreme Bodhi – the unsurpassed, wonderful enlightenment**. You have now turned from the small to go towards the great. You of the Two Vehicles have brought forth the Great Vehicle resolve and seek to attain great enlightenment; there is no enlightenment higher than this. **I have already taught you the true method of cultivation.** I have already explained the real method of cultivation for you.

G2 Specific indication of the subtle demonic events.

Sutra:

"You are still not aware of the subtle demonic events that can occur when you cultivate shamatha and vipashyana. If you cannot recognize a demonic state when it appears, it is because the cleansing of your mind has not been proper. You will then be engulfed by deviant views.

Commentary:

You are still not aware… Earlier, Ananda asked the Buddha how to cultivate. He had requested the Dharma on behalf of living

beings of the future. But, although he now understands the principle of cultivation, he doesn't have any actual experience. He understands the theory, but since he lacks experience, he doesn't know what can occur in cultivation. So the Buddha said, "You are still not aware **of the subtle demonic events that can occur when you cultivate shamatha and vipashyana.**" In cultivating shamatha, which refers to the Great Shurangama Samadhi, and in cultivating vipashyana, a method of subtle contemplation, subtle demonic states can arise. In the process of cultivation, many demonic states can arise which are not very obvious, but, rather, extremely obscure.

If you cannot recognize a demonic state when it appears… When you are cultivating the Way and practicing the skill of "directing the hearing inward to listen to the inherent nature," a demonic state may appear. If you do not recognize the demon and do not know what demons are, **it is because the cleansing of your mind has not been proper**. You have been cleansing your mind, but what you have done is slightly incorrect not in accord with proper knowledge and views. For that reason, **you will then be engulfed by deviant views**. If your knowledge and views are the slightest bit improper, you will be caught up in deviant views.

Sutra:

"You may be troubled by a demon from your own skandhas or a demon from the heavens. Or you may be possessed by a ghost or spirit, or you may encounter a li ghost or a mei ghost. If your mind is not clear, you will mistake a thief for your own son.

Commentary:

You may be troubled by a demon from your own skandhas; that is, a demon produced from your own mind, or one of the ten kinds of demons produced from the form skandha, which is also of your own making. **Or** it may be **a demon from the heavens**. Why should a demon from the heavens come to disturb you? It's because you have cultivated to the point that you have some samadhi.

Having samadhi is no problem in itself, but what happens is that the demon king's palace starts to shake. It seems just like an earthquake. Since the demon king has spiritual powers, as soon as the shaking starts, he investigates, "Why is my palace shaking for no apparent reason? Why is it breaking apart? Aha!" He discovers that someone in the world is about to accomplish the Way and that the strength of that person's samadhi is shattering his palace. The demon king thinks, "So you want to destroy me? Well, I'm going to destroy your samadhi first!" Then he comes to wipe out your samadhi power.

Or you may be possessed by a ghost or spirit. When the ghosts and spirits see that you are about to realize the fruition in your cultivation, they become jealous. They think, "Oh, so you are going to realize the fruition? We're going to destroy your cultivation first!" Then they enter your mind or possess your body, making it impossible for you to perfect your samadhi power. They cause you to "catch on fire" and become possessed. Didn't the preceding passage of text talk about being possessed by a demon? This is very important. Why do you become possessed by a demon? Because "the cleansing of your mind has not been proper," and because your motivation is improper. With even the slightest deviant thought, you get caught by a demon. This is known as "catching on fire and entering a demonic state."

Or you may encounter a li ghost or a mei ghost or a wang liang. Those are types of ghosts and goblins. **If your mind is not clear, you will mistake a thief for your own son.** If you encounter such a state and fail to recognize or understand it, you will end up "mistaking a thief for your son." Think. about it: How can they not rob or steal your possessions? If you invite a thief into your home, then all the priceless treasures in your house will be stolen. What are your priceless treasures? I will tell you frankly, and be sure to remember this! You should believe what I say. Whatever you do, don't fail to believe what I say. Why? Because it is important to your future and to your life. What are your treasures? They are your very own Treasury of the Tathagata. Can your Treasury of the

Tathagata be stolen? Didn’t I mention essence, energy and spirit before? If you want to regain your Treasury of the Tathagata, you first have to protect your essence, energy, and spirit. If you fail to guard these three, you are allowing your wealth to be robbed from you. So be careful!

[January 1983] All people like money. They think, “What Heaven has conferred is called money; accordance with nature is called money. Money may not be left for an instant. If it could be left, it would not be money.” Ordinary worldly people have this problem. That is, they cannot see through the matter of money, so they can’t put it down. It wouldn’t be so bad if you were the only one poisoned by money. But you also want to poison your children and grandchildren, so you leave money for your sons and daughters. Your children then leave money for their children, and they in turn leave money for their children. Passing the money back and forth, people are so poisoned by this toxic substance that they can’t even catch their breath. This is really frightening. Therefore, here we tell everyone that money has poison on it. You still don’t believe it though, and you always want to be very close to money. You’ve been poisoned by it, and the harmful effects will poison your children and grandchildren as well in all the generations to come.

In the past I’ve said this many times: people think saving up money is a good thing. But people who cultivate the Way should not take money so seriously; they need not save money. We don’t need to think “Money may not be left for an instant.” We should change the phrase around to say, “What Heaven has conferred is called the Dharma; accordance with nature is called the Dharma. The Dharma may not be left for an instant. If it could be left, it would not be the Dharma.” What is meant by “the Dharma”? You say, “I know. It’s the Dharma of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.” You don’t really understand yet. If you really understood, you wouldn’t lose your Dharma.

Ultimately, what is the Dharma? It is just our energy, our vital energy which penetrates heaven and earth to the point that all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are of the same substance as us because our energy is connected. This energy is like our breath; it can be detected. That which is within the energy and controls it is the Dharma. Therefore, it is essential that we nurture our energy; we should not lose our temper. You should cultivate your energy, as in the saying, "Foster the ground of your mind, and nurture the sky of your nature." This is nurturing your energy. If you want to nurture your energy, then don't lose your Dharma. I will tell you a most important and essential Dharma-door. If you listen, fine. If you don't listen, that's okay, too, but I'll tell you anyway. What is it? If you want to nurture your energy, then don't talk so much.

Don't talk so much in the kitchen. Today it's a little better. But in the last two days, when I went to the kitchen and dining hall, it sounded like a marketplace. Everyone was shouting. One person was selling carrots, another was selling cabbage, another was selling potatoes, and someone else was selling sweet potatoes. What did they think they were doing, shouting and yelling like that? They'd forgotten completely about the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. There's no need to make such a racket in the kitchen. That is not how cultivators should behave. Later I found out that the dormitory was also like a marketplace. People were quarreling, chattering, and making noise everywhere. No one knows what they were talking about.

A person who cannot limit his speech will not be able to cultivate. If you cannot nurture your energy, then you do not have the Dharma. Therefore, "The Dharma may not be left for an instant." You can very easily and carelessly squander this Dharma by talking all the time. I do not like to interfere in other people's business, but this is really too much! If this continues, these people who argue all day long will be the villains of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. No wonder the Buddhas don't want to stay here anymore, and the Bodhisattvas also stay far away; they don't want to listen to these people who do nothing but gossip and

chatter. I don’t mean to say that people shouldn’t talk to each other at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. People should certainly discuss important matters, but they should not be chatting idly all the time.

You say, “Oh, nothing’s happening around here. I’m so lonely, I’ve gotta find someone to talk to.”

That might be all right, but after you’ve had your chat, you will have lost all Dharma whatsoever. If you lose the Dharma, how can you cultivate the Way?

Sutra:

“It is also possible to feel satisfied after a small accomplishment, like the Unlearned Bhikshu who reached the Fourth Dhyana and claimed that he had realized sagehood. When his celestial reward ended and the signs of decay appeared, he slandered Arhatship as being subject to birth and death, and thus he fell into the Avichi Hell.

Commentary:

It is also possible to feel satisfied after a small accomplishment. In cultivation, even if you do not become possessed by a demon, you must still have genuine wisdom and Dharma selecting vision. If you recognize the Buddhadharma, you yourself should know what level you have reached. Don’t obtain only a little bit and feel satisfied, **like the Unlearned Bhikshu who reached the Fourth Dhyana and claimed that he had realized sagehood.** He was called the Unlearned Bhikshu because he didn’t have much sense. He knew little about the principles of Buddhism. In what way was he unlearned? Basically, the four fruitions of Arhatship are all beyond the Four Dhyana Heavens. The Buddha explained that one who has realized the fourth fruition of Arhatship no longer undergoes birth and death. A sage who has realized the second fruition is called a Once Returner. He is born once in the heavens and once in the human realm; he has one more round of birth and death to undergo. A sage of the first fruition has seven more rounds of birth and death to undergo. All of these states surpass the Four

Dhyana Heavens. The Unlearned Bhikshu had only reached the level of the Fourth Dhyana Heaven in his cultivation, but he thought he had already realized the fourth fruition of Arhatship. In fact, at the level of the Fourth Dhyana Heaven, one has not realized any fruition and is still an ordinary person.

But the Unlearned Bhikshu claimed that he had attained the fourth fruition of Arhatship. Now, however, people think that the level of a fourth stage Arhat is still too low for them, and they brazenly claim that they themselves are Buddhas. But a Buddha has Three Bodies, Four Wisdoms, Five Eyes, and Six Spiritual Powers. You can ask those people who claim to be Buddhas how many spiritual powers they have. Ghosts have five of the Six Spiritual Powers; they lack the spiritual power of freedom from outflows. At the fruition of Buddhahood, one has all Six Spiritual Powers. I believe that anyone who claimed to be a Buddha would not have even one spiritual power, let alone five or six. Only someone lacking spiritual powers would claim to be a Buddha. Anyone with even one spiritual power wouldn’t tell such a great lie.

When his celestial reward ended, when his life in the heavens came to an end **and the signs of decay appeared…** Do you remember the Five Signs of Decay[1]? When the life of a heavenly being comes to an end and he is about to die, these five signs appear.

He slandered Arhatship as being subject to birth and death, and thus he fell into the Avichi Hell. When his blessings in the heavens ran out, the Five Signs of Decay appeared and his life in the heavens came to an end, the Unlearned Bhikshu got angry. What was he angry about? He said, “I’ve been deceived by the Buddha! The Buddha is a charlatan. He said that when you realize the fourth fruition of Arhatship, you don’t have to undergo birth and death ever again. Why is my life coming to an end now? Why

1. The Five Signs of Decay are: (1) The flowers on the gods’ crowns wilt; (2) their clothes become dirty; (3) their armpits sweat; (4) their bodies become smelly and filthy; and (5) they cannot sit still.

do I have to be reborn? Why do I have to undergo transmigration again? The Buddha is a liar!" Guess what happened when he slandered the Buddha like that. He fell into the Avichi Hell.

The Avichi Hell is also called the Relentless Hell. Basically he had not realized the fourth fruition of Arhatship at all, but he claimed that he had. When he used up his celestial blessings and reached the end of his life, he fell into the lower realms. He did not realize his mistake and said that the Buddha had spoken the Dharma incorrectly. In fact the Buddha had said, "You have not realized the fourth fruition of Arhatship. If you had, naturally there would be no more birth and death for you. How could the Five Signs of Decay appear?" Upon slandering the Buddha, the Unlearned Bhikshu immediately fell into the Relentless Hell the Avichi Hell. Where do you suppose those people who claim to be Buddhas go? I don't know where they end up.

G3 Exhortation to pay attention and promise to speak.

Sutra:

"You should pay attention. I will now explain this for you in detail."

Commentary:

You should pay attention. Ananda, you should pay special attention. Listen carefully. **I will now explain this for you,** Ananda, and for everyone else, **in** great **detail,** so don't disappoint me.

F2 The members of the assembly bow and listen respectfully.

Sutra:

Ananda stood up and, with the others in the assembly who had More to Learn, bowed joyfully. They quieted themselves in order to listen to the compassionate instruction.

Commentary:

Ananda stood up immediately **and, with the others in the assembly** the great Bodhisattvas, the great Arhats, the great Bhikshus, and those **who had More to Learn,** people at the first, second, and third fruitions **bowed joyfully**. Since the Buddha was about to explain the matter in detail, everyone was happy, and together they joyfully paid homage and bowed to the Buddha. **They quieted themselves in order to listen to the compassionate instruction.** They subdued their minds and had no more extraneous thoughts, so they could listen with full attention to the Dharma the Buddha was about to speak.

F3 Detailed explanation of the demons' deeds.
G1 Telling where they come from.
H1 Samadhi is the reason for the demons' agitation.
I1 Emphasizing the significance of the dual aspects of true and false, production and destruction.
J1 First, explaining that our fundamental enlightenment is the same as the Buddha's.

Sutra:

The Buddha told Ananda and the whole assembly, "You should know that the twelve categories of beings in this world of outflows are endowed with a wonderfully bright, fundamental enlightenment – the enlightened, perfect substance of the mind which is not different from that of the Buddhas of the ten directions.

Commentary:

The Buddha told Ananda and everyone in **the whole assembly**: All of **you** people who are now present **should know that the twelve categories of beings in this world of outflows are endowed with a wonderfully bright, fundamental enlightenment –** an inherent, enlightened nature, the wonderfully bright, true mind – **the enlightened, perfect substance of the mind, which is not different from that of the Buddhas of the ten directions.** It is the same. There is no difference. The Buddhas of the ten directions are endowed with it, and the twelve categories of beings are also

endowed with this enlightened nature, which is also called the Treasury of the Tathagata.

J2 Next, explaining how emptiness comes from falseness.

Sutra:

"Due to the fault of false thinking and confusion about the truth, infatuation arises and makes your confusion all pervasive. Consequently, an emptiness appears. Worlds come into being as that confusion is ceaselessly transformed. Therefore, the lands that are not without outflows, as numerous as motes of dust throughout the ten directions, are all created as a result of confusion, dullness, and false thinking.

Commentary:

Due to the fault of false thinking and confusion about the truth… Hey, Ananda! Your inherent nature and the inherent nature of the twelve categories of beings are not different from the Buddhas'; they are one and the same. However, because you create falseness out of the truth and then become confused about what is the genuine truth, faults arise and errors are made.

Infatuation arises… What is the biggest fault? Infatuation (literally, "obsessed love"). You could say obsession and love are two things; you can also explain them as one: infatuation. Your ignorance prevents you from understanding, and love is all you know about. You think about love, from morning to night. You can't put down love and lust for a moment. If you investigated the Buddhadharma as attentively as you pursue lust and love, you would become a Buddha very soon. What a pity you cannot transform your fondness for the opposite sex into fondness for the Buddhadharma instead! The more you study the Buddhadharma, the more boring you think it is. You say, "I have many faults, and the Buddhadharma points them all out to me. I don't want to study it anymore. The Buddhadharma wants me to change my habits, and how can I do that?" That's one example of obsession about love. Above, the text said, "Due to the fault of false thinking and

confusion about the truth...” Now, I could say that mistakes are made due to obsession about love.

You make mistakes based on infatuation. Infatuation arises and **makes your confusion all pervasive**. Your infatuation produces an all-pervading confusion. You become confused about everything. It all starts with infatuation. Once you become infatuated, you don’t understand anything. Nothing matters to you. You figure, “If I fall into the hells, so be it! Why should I worry?” You no longer care about anything.

Consequently, an emptiness appears. Because you make mistakes based on infatuation because men think about women from morning to night, and women think about men all day long a false emptiness arises. **Worlds come into being as that confusion is ceaselessly transformed**. The confusion multiplies so that one confusion becomes two confusions, and two confusions turn into three confusions. The confusion evolves without end. Intelligent people should take note of this! You should pay attention to this passage of Sutra text. Its message really penetrates to the bone. It points out all of your faults!

Then the world comes into being. **Therefore, the lands that are not without outflows, as numerous as motes of dust throughout the ten directions, are all created as a result of confusion, dullness, and false thinking**. The worlds throughout the ten directions are not indestructible; they are not without outflows, because they have no basic substance of their own. They are all mere creations of false thinking. Confusion refers to lack of understanding; dullness refers to being obstinate and unyielding. The world is created by your false thinking. Did you know that?

J3 For the sake of comparison, describing the minuteness of the realm of space.

Sutra:

“You should know that the space created in your mind is like a wisp of cloud that dots the vast sky. How much smaller must all the worlds within that space be!

Commentary:

"Ananda, don't sleep! You should know that when I say don't sleep, that means don't be confused. Don't be infatuated anymore. Don't be confused about the truth anymore." The Buddha told Ananda not to sleep, and now I'm telling you all not to sleep!

Right now, what's important is that **you should know that the space created in your mind is like a wisp of cloud that dots the vast sky**. All of space, which is created from your mind, is like a wisp of cloud in the sky when compared to your mind. A wisp of cloud in the sky is tiny, and the sky, representing your mind, is vast. Earlier the Sutra said:

> *The space created within great enlightenment*
> *Is like a single bubble in all the sea.*

And now it says, "The space created in your mind is like a wisp of cloud that dots the vast sky." All of space being that small, how vast your mind must be! And **how much smaller must all the worlds within that space be!** All the worlds within that empty space must be minute. If they were in your mind, they would be even smaller. So this describes how our enlightened nature pervades all places.

J4 Returning to the source obliterates space.

Sutra:

"If even one person among you finds the truth and returns to the source, then all of space in the ten directions is obliterated. How could the worlds within that space fail to be destroyed as well?

Commentary:

If even one person among you finds the truth and returns to the source... Finding the truth and returning to the source means becoming a Buddha. Realizing the fourth fruition of Arhatship can also be called finding the truth and returning to the source. "Ananda, if one person among you becomes a Buddha, **then all of space in the ten directions is obliterated. How could the worlds**

within that space fail to be destroyed as well?” Even space is gone, so how can the worlds still exist? The worlds are all gone, too.

Someone says, “If so many Buddhas have accomplished Buddhahood and becoming a Buddha is supposed to obliterate space, then why hasn’t space disappeared yet?”

From the point of view of living beings, space exists; but from the point of view of the Buddhas, there is nothing at all. There are different points of view, and so you can’t make generalizations. For instance, people who have opened the Five Eyes can see what is happening in this country and in other countries that are tens of thousands of miles away. Can you who haven’t opened the Buddha Eye see such things? No. By the same token, one cannot say, “I can see it, therefore it must exist.” You may see it as existing, but from the Buddhas’ perspective, there is nothing at all, not even space.

I2 Explaining that great samadhi causes demons to manifest.
J1 One’s mind tallies with the minds of the sages.

Sutra:

“When you cultivate dhyana and attain samadhi, your mind tallies with the minds of the Bodhisattvas and the great Arhats of the ten directions who are free of outflows, and you abide in a state of profound purity.

Commentary:

When you cultivate dhyana concentration **and attain samadhi**, the essence of **your mind tallies** and unites **with the minds of** all **the Bodhisattvas and** all **the great Arhats of the ten directions who are free of outflows, and you abide in a state of profound purity.** You don’t have to seek elsewhere for this pure, fundamental tranquillity. It is right where you are. Right here is the pure, inherently tranquil Treasury of the Tathagata, which pervades the Dharma Realm.

Why do the minds of the Bodhisattvas, the great Arhats, and the cultivators of samadhi tally in this way? Because they cultivate the

same samadhi. They direct the hearing inward to listen to the inherent nature, until the inherent nature accomplishes the Unsurpassed Way. They all cultivate the Great Shurangama Samadhi, and so they are all the same; they become unified. Their minds are connected as if there were an electric current running between them.

This connection, however, doesn't occur only at the level of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Arhats. It also occurs among ordinary people. For example, when you think about a person, your thought will reach his mind, just like a telegram. "Does the other person know?" you ask. His inherent nature knows, even though his conscious mind may be unaware of it. At the level of that nature, we all know one another.

"Well, if I think about someone from morning to night, then that person will also think about me, right?"

You could think till you die, and it still wouldn't be any use. It is like the infatuation we talked about before. If a person is infatuated, he will think about the object of his affection all day long, unable to put the thought down. He is always thinking and thinking, until he thinks himself to death! How does he die? He thinks about her until they come together and get married. Once married, he becomes muddled. After being muddled for a time, he dies. Being married is equivalent to being muddled not knowing anything at all. In Chinese, you can deduce that meaning from the character for "marriage" *hun* (婚), which contains the word for "muddled" *hun* (昏); I don't know if this interpretation exists in English.

J2 The demons come en masse to cause disturbance.

Sutra:

"All the kings of demons, the ghosts and spirits, and the ordinary gods see their palaces collapse for no apparent reason. The earth quakes, and all the creatures in the water, on the land, and in the air, without exception, are frightened. Yet

ordinary people who are sunk in dim confusion remain unaware of these changes.

Commentary:

When one obtains the Great Shurangama Samadhi, the true samadhi, the demon kings shudder. **All the kings of demons, the ghosts and spirits, and the ordinary gods** of the Six Desire Heavens and Four Dhyana Heavens **see their palaces collapse for no apparent reason.** The situation is really out of control. For no apparent reason, their palaces start falling apart.

Have I ever told you about a young disciple I had in Manchuria? He was about fourteen years old, and although he was young, his spiritual powers certainly weren't insignificant. He could ascend to the heavens and enter the earth. He had opened the Five Eyes, but had not obtained the Six Spiritual Powers. He had five of the spiritual powers, but lacked the power of freedom from outflows. When a person attains this power, he becomes an Arhat.

One day he ascended to the heavens to amuse himself. When he got there, the demon king took a liking to him and trapped him in his palace. It was an exquisite palace, made of transparent crystal like material, but he was trapped in it. Since he had opened his Five Eyes, he could see his Dharma body being held captive there by the demon king. So he came and told me, "Teacher, I went to the heavens, and now I can't come back."

"So you're stuck in the heavens, huh?" I said, "Well, who told you to go there in the first place?"

"I thought that it would be lots of fun, so I went there to take a look. But now that person up in the heavens won't let me come back."

I said, "If you want to have fun, don't go there to play. Those demons in the Six Desire Heavens are always looking for an opportunity to destroy the samadhi power of cultivators." Then I said, "Don't be scared; I'll get you back."

I tried to get him back, but the demon king refused to let him go. At that point he became really frightened and said, "He won't let me come back! What should I do?"

I said, "Don't worry. I'll bring you back now." Then I used the Shurangama Mantra, the section which I've told you destroys demons, the "Mantra of the Five Great Hearts." Ah! The demon palace immediately shattered, and he came back that time. This is a true story.

Now the palaces of the demon kings have fallen apart and collapsed, and **the earth quakes** and cracks open in many places, **and all the creatures in the water, on the land, and in the air, without exception, are frightened**. All the creatures in the water and on the land go flying through the air, scared out of their wits and frightened beyond control. **Yet ordinary people who are sunk in dim confusion remain unaware of these changes**. Ordinary people do not have such sharp perception, and they do not realize the earth is undergoing all these changes. They are not sensitive enough to perceive the six kinds of quaking occurring in the earth.

Sutra:

"All these beings have five kinds of spiritual powers; they lack only freedom from outflows, because they are still attached to worldly passions. How could they allow you to destroy their palaces? That is why the ghosts, spirits, celestial demons, sprites, and goblins come to disturb you when you are in samadhi.

Commentary:

Now do you understand? Why do the demons come? It is just because **all these** celestial **beings**, ghosts, and spirits **have five kinds of spiritual powers**, which are the celestial eye, the celestial ear, the knowledge of others' thoughts, the knowledge of previous lives, and the complete spirit. But they don't have the power of freedom from outflows. If they obtained that power, they wouldn't trouble you anymore. But since they haven't obtained it, they still want to be evil and come to destroy you.

They lack only freedom from outflows. It is not easy to attain the power of freedom from outflows. What does this mean? I will be very frank about it. What we call “outflows” are the daily, random thoughts that men and women have about. one another. If you have not put an end to such thoughts, then you have not rid yourself of outflows.

Now I’ll discuss this more in depth, and I’ll be very frank with you. If I didn’t tell you the truth, then you would never know what is really being referred to. Being rid of outflows simply means retaining your essence. If your essence escapes, that’s an outflow. Now I have told you the secret of heaven and earth. If you retain your essence, then you won’t have outflows. Furthermore, if you can not only prevent your essence from escaping, but can also be without lustful thoughts, even on the subtlest level, then you have truly rid yourself of outflows. Now do you understand? Why haven’t the celestial demons achieved freedom from outflows? Because they still have thoughts of lust, as do ghosts and spirits.

Because they are still attached to worldly passions. Worldly passions are simply a form of lust. That’s what they indulge in. **How could they allow you to destroy their palaces?** Since they are attached to lust, they do not want to see you renounce it. They want you to be greedy for it, too. “The two of us are good friends,” they will say. “I haven’t put this down, so you can’t just run away and renounce it.” That’s why they come. They cannot bear to see you transcend the world. **That is why the ghosts, spirits, celestial demons, sprites, and goblins come to disturb you when you are in samadhi.** When I mentioned goblins in the past, you didn’t know what they were, so now I will explain. Do you see how the Chinese character for “goblin” (妖) is written? It is the character for “woman” (女) beside the character for a short life for death before thirty years of age (夭). You can figure out the meaning from there; I don’t have to say too much. In general, people who die young will become goblins.

When you are in samadhi, they all come en masse to bother you. Their aim, as it's said, is "to devour the flesh of the Monk from Tang." The Monk from Tang was Great Master Hsuan Tsuang. Many goblins would have liked to eat his flesh; that is, they wanted to disturb his samadhi. If you cultivate to the point that you have samadhi, the goblins, ghosts, and monsters will want to devour your flesh as well. Actually, they do not really eat your flesh. I will be more honest with you. I will bring it all out into the open and not hold anything back. What is really happening? When your essence, energy, and spirit are all full, because you have no thoughts of lust, these demons and ghosts want to steal your treasures. That's why they come to disturb you. If you have a girlfriend or boyfriend, she or he is also stealing your treasures. What else did you think was happening?

"The Buddhadharma teaches us to practice giving, so I'm giving away my treasures to others," you say.

Well then, you're going to end up as a poor ghost who falls into the hells. When that happens, the person who stole your treasures isn't going to say, "Here, I'll give you back some of your treasures so that you can get out of there." No one will help you then. You think it over.

H2 The demons can succeed in their destructiveness through the cultivator's confusion.

I1 Explanation by analogy of how "the guests" cannot bring harm.

Sutra:

"Although these demons possess tremendous enmity, they are in the grip of their worldly passions, while you are within wonderful enlightenment. They cannot affect you any more than a blowing wind can affect light or a knife can cut through water. You are like boiling water, while the demons are like solid ice which, in the presence of heat, soon melts away. Since they rely exclusively on spiritual powers, they are like mere guests.

Commentary:

When you achieve some samadhi power in your cultivation, the demon kings will be afraid and so they come to destroy it. They do not want you to have samadhi. **Although these demons** come to give you trouble, and although they **possess tremendous enmity**, much wrath, **they are in the grip of their worldly passions**. They are controlled by their deified sense experiences, **while you are within wonderful enlightenment. They cannot affect you any more than a blowing wind can affect light or a knife can cut through water**. They cannot do anything to you, just as, blowing wind could not make light move; and just as a knife, however many times it is slashed through water, could not harm the water.

You are like boiling water. In this analogy, the samadhi power from your cultivation is compared to hot water, **while the demons are like solid ice**. The demon kings can be compared to the solid ice of winter, **which, in the presence of heat, soon melts away**. As hard as the ice is, the heat of boiling water gradually causes it to melt. **Since they rely exclusively on spiritual powers, they are like mere guests**. All they have going for themselves is their spiritual powers, so they can never be the "host" or "master." They are merely "guests" [they cannot stay long], and they cannot succeed in their efforts to disturb you.

I2 Conclusion that the confusion is on the part of the cultivator.

Sutra:

"They can succeed in their destructiveness through your mind, which is the host of the five skandhas. If the host becomes confused, the guests will be able to do as they please.

Commentary:

They can succeed in their destructiveness through your mind, which is the host of the five skandhas. Basically, they cannot succeed in their destructiveness. However, **if the host becomes confused –** if your mind, which is the master of the five skandhas, is deluded **– the guests will be able to do as they please**.

The guests will be able to take advantage of you. As long as you, the host, are not confused, they cannot do anything to you. who is the host? It is your inherent nature. If your inherent nature is confused, then the demons can have their way with you. But if your inherent nature is not confused, then they are powerless to do anything.

I3 Once enlightened, one surely will transcend their disturbance.

Sutra:

"When you are in dhyana, awakened, aware, and free of delusion, their demonic deeds can do nothing to you. As the skandhas dissolve, you enter the light. All those deviant hordes depend upon dark energy. Since light can destroy darkness, they would be destroyed if they drew near you. How could they dare linger and try to disrupt your dhyana-samadhi?

Commentary:

When you are in dhyana, when you have stilled your thoughts and attained the proper concentration of samadhi, you are **awakened, aware, and free of delusion. Their demonic deeds can do nothing to you**. The demons won't be able to trouble you with their tactics. **As the skandhas dissolve, you enter the light**. Demons belong to the darkness (*yin*), and the darkness can be dispelled. It is as if the demons were ice and you were hot water. The darkness is dispelled like ice dissolving in hot water. The fire of your wisdom is bright, so you enter the light.

All those deviant hordes of demons, externalists, goblins, ghosts, and monsters **depend upon dark energy**. All their tactics depend on a dark, dismal energy. **Since light can destroy darkness**, if you have true samadhi and wisdom, your wisdom light will shine forth and dispel the darkness.

They would be destroyed if they drew near you. How could they dare linger and try to disrupt your dhyana-samadhi? If they came near you, they would do themselves in, so they dare not disturb you.

[January 1983] Skandha-demons are not limited to fifty kinds; there may be five hundred, five thousand, fifty thousand, or even five hundred thousand kinds. Each kind can further be divided into ten kinds. If analyzed in detail, there are thousands upon tens of thousands of kinds. In general, what is a skandha-demon? Basically it's nothing but a mass of *yin* energy, which comes from our *yin* thoughts. *Yin* thoughts include thoughts of greed, anger, and stupidity. They give rise to the skandhas of form, feeling, thought, formations, and consciousness; and in each of these skandhas, all kinds of *yin* phenomena are produced. These *yin* phenomena naturally appear when your skill reaches a certain level. If your skill hasn't reached that level, then you won't encounter these skandha-demons, even if you want to. They manifest only when your skill has reached that level. Don't worry when they appear. There's no need to fear being possessed by demons.

When these *yin* phenomena appear, you should remain calm, as if they didn't exist. See them as if not seeing them; hear them as if not hearing them; and smell them without perceiving their smell. If you don't enter into sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, and dharmas, then the skandha-demons will not be able to do anything to you. If you are without greed, anger, and stupidity, then you will subdue these skandha-demons. If you do not have the faults of being selfish, wanting personal profit, seeking, being greedy, or contending, then no demon will be able to do anything to you.

Now as we are investigating the skandha-demons, we should not be afraid of demons. There's no need for fear. What is this mass of energy like? There's a rough analogy: When water boils and gives off steam, the rising of the steam indicates that the water is boiling.

The demons that you encounter in cultivation are illusory transformations produced from the *yin* thoughts and *yin* energy in your own nature. If you can remain unmoved by these illusory transformations, then there's no problem. For example, there's nothing

strange about boiling water and letting the steam rise. After the steam has risen, you can drink the water.

When a person manifests demonic energy, it's like gold being smelted. All the dross is smelted away, leaving only pure gold. Cultivation is like smelting gold. It is said, "True gold does not fear the fire of the furnace." You must smelt the pure gold and forge your Vajra-indestructible body. To obtain the Vajra-indestructible body, you must apply effort in cultivation at all times, in thought after thought. No matter what level you reach in your cultivation, do not become happy or afraid. This is a most essential and basic way for cultivators to resolve demonic obstacles.

I4 Confusion will certainly bring a fall.

Sutra:

"If you were not clear and aware, but were confused by the skandhas, then you, Ananda, would surely become one of the demons; you would turn into a demonic being.

Commentary:

If you were not clear and aware, if you did not understand and wake up, **but were confused by the** demons of the five **skandhas, then you, Ananda, would surely become one of the demons; you would turn into a demonic being.** You would join the retinue of demons.

I5 The prior incident in the house of prostitution brought only slight harm.

Sutra:

"Your encounter with Matangi's daughter was a minor incident. She cast a spell on you to make you break the Buddha's moral precepts. Still, among the eighty thousand modes of conduct, you violated only one precept. Because your mind was pure, all was not lost.

Commentary:

Your encounter with Matangi's daughter was a minor incident. It was a relatively insignificant, commonplace demonic event. **She cast a spell on you to make you break the Buddha's moral precepts**. She used a mantra of the Ancient Brahma Heaven to confuse you and tried to make you break the Buddha's rules. **Still, among the eighty thousand modes of conduct, you violated only one precept. Because your mind was pure, all was not lost**. Because you had already attained the first stage of Arhatship, you were not totally confused by her, and you did not fall.

I6 Joining the ranks of demons would bring great harm.

Sutra:

"This would be an attempt to completely destroy your precious enlightenment. Were it to succeed, you would become like the family of a senior government official who is suddenly exiled; his family wanders, bereft and alone, with no one to pity or rescue them.

Commentary:

This would be an attempt to completely destroy your precious enlightenment. That kind of behavior was an attempt to make you fall. **Were it to succeed, you would become like the family of a senior government official who is suddenly exiled**. A high official is banished, and his family's property is abruptly confiscated by the emperor, so **his family wanders, bereft and alone, with no one to pity or rescue them**. You would be standing all alone, with no place to seek for help, no one to turn to for sympathy or aid.

CHAPTER 2

The Form Skandha

G2 Detailed analysis of the characteristics of the demons of the five skandhas.
H1 The characteristics of the demons of the form skandha.
I1 Overview from beginning to end.
J1 Initial cultivation does not break though the skandhas' boundaries.

Sutra:

"Ananda, you should know that as a cultivator sits in the Bodhimanda, he is doing away with all thoughts. When his thoughts come to an end, there will be nothing on his mind. This state of pure clarity will stay the same whether in movement or stillness, in remembrance or forgetfulness.

Commentary:

Ananda, you should know that as a cultivator sits in the Bodhimanda, he is doing away with all thoughts. Ananda, you should know that you are simply cultivating the skill of turning back your hearing to listen to your inherent nature." In that way you obliterate all thoughts. **When his thoughts come to an end, there will be nothing on his mind. This state of pure clarity**, this wisdom and samadhi-power, **will stay the same whether in movement or stillness, in remembrance or forgetfulness**. Your mind does not change whether you are moving or still. whether you are mindful or absent-minded, your state is the same. It is non-dual.

Sutra:

"When he dwells in this place and enters samadhi, he is like a person with clear vision who finds himself in total darkness. Although his nature is wonderfully pure, his mind is not yet illuminated. This is the region of the form skandha.

Commentary:

When he dwells in this place and enters samadhi… Ananda! when he cultivates samadhi power and resides in a state of purity that remains the same whether he is moving or still, mindful or forgetful, **he is like a person with clear vision who finds himself in total darkness**. He is like a person with good eyes who is living in a dark house. **Although his nature is wonderfully pure, his mind is not yet illuminated**. Although his nature is pure, bright, and wondrous, his mind has not yet attained the light of genuine wisdom. **This is the region of the form skandha**.

J2 Ultimately it breaks up and reveals its false source.

Sutra:

"If his eyes become clear, he will then experience the ten directions as an open expanse, and the darkness will be gone. This is the end of the form skandha. He will then be able to transcend the turbidity of kalpas. Contemplating the cause of the form skandha, one sees that false thoughts of solidity are its source.

Commentary:

If his eyes become clear, he will then experience the ten directions as an open expanse, and the darkness will be gone. What is this state called? This is the end of the form skandha. Of the five skandhas: form, feeling, thinking, formations, and consciousness, the form skandha is gone. He will then be able to transcend the turbidity of kalpas. Contemplating the cause of the form skandha, one sees that false thoughts of solidity are its source. When the person goes beyond the turbidity of kalpas, his actions will be based on false thoughts of solidity.

[December 2,1993]

Disciple: When the form skandha comes to an end, this person can then transcend the turbidity of kalpas. Contemplating the cause of the form skandha, he sees that false thoughts of solidity are its source.

Venerable Master: He still has false thoughts. They are "solid" because he is too deeply attached to that state.

Disciple: Are false thoughts of solidity the source of the form skandha?

Venerable Master: That's how it is when he reaches that state. It is not a matter of whether or not something is the source. There's no way to get to the root of it. This is all false. Form, feeling, thinking, formations, and consciousness are all like this. "The five skandhas, like floating clouds, emptily come and go. The three poisons, like air bubbles in water, rise and disappear." They are unreal. Every state is false.

Disciple: It's just like a dream; you can't make any sense out of dreams.

Venerable Master: Yes, "In a dream, the six destinies clearly exist. After awakening, everything is empty and the universe is gone."

I2 The ten states within this region.
J1 His body can transcend obstructions.

Sutra:

"Ananda, at this point, as the person intently investigates that wondrous brightness, the four elements will no longer function together, and soon the body will be able to transcend obstructions. This state is called 'the pure brightness merging into the environment.' It is a temporary state in the course of cultivation and does not indicate sagehood. If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons' influence.

Commentary:

We are now discussing the demons associated with the five skandhas: form, feeling, thinking, formations, and consciousness. There are ten kinds of demons for each of the skandhas, making a total of fifty. Cultivators should have a clear understanding of these fifty types of demons. If you are not dear about these states, you could easily end up in the demon king's retinue, and you won't even know how you got there. That's why you have to be especially careful.

Ananda, at this point, as the person intently investigates that wondrous brightness… when the form skandha is about to end, he experiences the ten directions opening up and perceives a kind of brightness. As he investigates that state of subtle wonder and brightness, **the four elements will no longer function together, and soon the body will be able to transcend obstructions**. The four elements will cease to function (normally), and very soon after that the body will become free of obstructions, just like empty space. This is known as the "body produced by intent." It is another body that can leave the physical body. Earlier I mentioned my disciple who went to the heavens in his Dharma-body, which is also the "body produced by intent." The intent refers to the mind, one of the six sense faculties. Such a body, being a creation of the mind, is able to transcend obstructions.

This state is called 'the pure brightness merging into the environment.' The pure light flows into the surrounding environment.

[December 2, 1993]

Disciple: "This state is called the pure brightness merging into the environment." How is this sentence explained?

Venerable Master: This means that the person is too smart. He has false intelligence and worldly wisdom. He's simply too clever!

Disciple: What does "the environment" refer to?

Venerable Master: It refers to the state mentioned earlier.

Disciple: Is it the state that occurs when he is working at cultivation?

Venerable Master: It's simply the state he attained previously.

It is a temporary state in the course of cultivation. This kind of skill is temporary; it will not last. It is different from being able to come and go wherever you please. With that kind of complete freedom, one can:

Let it go, and it fills the six directions;
Roll it up, and it secretly hides away.

If one lets it go, it fills the universe. And yet one can gather it back in at any time. If you cannot do this whenever you want, then yours is only a temporary skill. It's a state that you may encounter when you reach a certain level in your cultivation. However, this state is temporary. You won't always have a body that transcends obstructions. **And** so it **does not indicate sagehood**. You have not reached the fruition of a sage. This isn't what it's like when a sage realizes the fruition.

If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. That is, you don't say, "Oh, I truly have some skill in my cultivation! I can actually send a body out through the top of my head!" If you become arrogant like that, what happens? It's all over for you. However, if you don't interpret this state as proof that you have attained to sagehood, then this state is no great hindrance; there is nothing particularly wrong with it. **But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons' influence**. You might say, "Oh! My skill is extraordinary. I'm fantastic! I am a sage who has transcended the world! I'm an Arhat!" If you think that way, the demons will descend upon you. Once the demons come, you are headed for a fall into the hells.

J2 Internally the light pervades and he can extract intestinal worms.

Sutra:

"Further, Ananda, as the person uses his mind to intently investigate that wondrous light, the light will pervade his body. Suddenly he will be able extract intestinal worms from his own body, yet his body will remain intact and unharmed. This state is called 'the pure light surging through one's physical body.' It is a temporary state in the course of intense practice, and does not indicate sagehood. If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons' influence.

Commentary:

This is the second demonic state of the form skandha. These demonic states are brought about by your vigorous effort in cultivation. If you were not working hard, you could not attract such demonic states even if you wanted to. The demons would pay no attention to you. In their eyes, you would be just another poor person, and they would obtain no advantage in coming after you. But now since you've been cultivating, you've amassed some treasures, and that's what the demons are after.

What should you do when they come? You have to remain in a state of unmoving suchness and clear understanding. Do not become attached to appearances. Have no attachments at all. Do not think, "What a fine state! I'd like to experience it again!" Don't welcome it, and don't reject it. Just act as if nothing were happening. If you do not consider yourself a sage, then it is a good state. But if you think you are a sage, and you say, "Wow! I'm incredible! I can pull parasites out of my body," if you decide you've obtained spiritual powers and self-mastery, then you've made a mistake. With that one thought of arrogance, the demons come. Riding on that thought of arrogance, they bore into your mind and take over. They manipulate you until you have no samadhi power left.

Therefore, you have to truly understand the principles of cultivation! Only then can you keep from falling into a trap or going down the wrong road. If you don't understand the Buddhadharma, it is very easy to go astray. There is no problem if you do not have any real skill. But when you gain some skill, the demon kings will have their eyes on you every moment, and the first opportunity they see, they will come to disturb you.

Further, Ananda, as the person uses his mind to intently investigate that wondrous brightness, the light will pervade his body. If you persist in your cultivation, you will eventually be able to see everything inside your own body. It's one thing if you are always able to see like that; but if you only have this ability once in a while, then it is merely a state of the form skandha.

Suddenly he will be able to extract intestinal worms from his own body, yet his body will remain intact and unharmed. In this state, suddenly you can pull worms out of your own abdomen. There are long worms and short ones, big ones and small ones. You can just reach your hand in and pluck them out. The extracted worms are real, and yet there is no injury to the abdomen. How do you suppose they came out? If you reach your hand into the abdomen to pull out the worms, the abdomen should be injured, but there is no rupture at all. "His body will remain intact" could be explained in two ways. One way would be to change the translation to read "their bodies will remain intact" and say that the worms' bodies' are still intact, not in the least damaged; they are whole and complete, alive and healthy. You could also say that your own abdomen is intact and uninjured.

This state is called 'the pure light surging through one's physical body.' An extremely pure and brilliant light penetrates your body. You do not actually put your hand in the abdomen and pluck the worms out they issue forth of themselves. **It is a temporary state in the course of intense practice and does not indicate sagehood**. This state is not something that happens all the

time. If this were a perpetual state, the situation would be different. This is not the state of a sage.

If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. It is fine; it won't cause any great trouble. **But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons' influence**. If you say, "I've attained sagehood. I can take things out of my stomach. Isn't it wonderful? You don't have such a state." If you become arrogant and attached to your state, you are in for trouble. You will be dragged off by the demon king to become part of his retinue.

J3 His essence and souls alternately separate and unite.

Sutra:

"Further, as the person uses his mind to intently investigate inside and outside, his physical and spiritual souls, intellect, will, essence, and spirit will be able to interact with one another without affecting his body. They will take turns as host and guests. Then he may suddenly hear the Dharma being spoken in space, or perhaps he will hear esoteric truths being pronounced simultaneously throughout the ten directions. This state is called 'the essence and souls alternately separating and uniting, and the planting of good seeds.' It is a temporary state and does not indicate sagehood. If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons' influence.

Commentary:

Further, as the person uses his mind to intently investigate the wondrous brightness **inside and outside**, striving to exceed excellence, incessantly trying to refine that process, **his spiritual and physical souls** undergo a change. There are three spiritual and seven physical souls residing in the human body. I have mentioned these ten "brothers" before. Some of them have only ears or only eyes. Some have merely a nose, but no lips, eyes, or ears. Each of them possesses only one sense organ and lacks the other five, so

they cannot function on their own. They must work cooperatively as a team. Those with ears help out those lacking ears; those with eyes help out those lacking eyes. They depend on and help one another.

[December 2, 1993]

Venerable Master: Our three souls and seven spirits are like children. But they each have only one sense faculty, not many. Because they control our bodies, we are able to speak and perform actions. They are gathered together, and when your cultivation is accomplished, they become what is known as a Buddha in Buddhism or an immortal in Taoism. Some have only eyes and some have only ears, so they help each other. The child who has ears and can hear will help the one who can see. They are interconnected. So when you achieve the interchangeable functioning of the six sense faculties, your ears will be able to eat and talk. There are many states such as these that you cannot even conceive of.

Disciple: Venerable Master, you mentioned that you had a young disciple who went to the heavens to play and was captured by a demon king. He cried, “What can I do? I can’t come back!” Did some of his souls and spirits go there?

Venerable Master: Among his three souls and seven spirits, maybe only one went, or maybe two went, or maybe three or four went. It’s not for sure. Once they got there, they aggregated together. They were not seven or three separate entities. Once they go out, they unite into one. That’s how wonderful and mysterious it is. It’s a mass of efficacious energy!

Disciple: Is it because of different levels of cultivation that some people can send out more spirits than others?

Venerable Master: It’s better not to send spirits out. If they always go out to play, they risk being caught by the demons. when the souls and spirits are captured, one becomes dumb. Retarded people and people who are that way because their souls and spirits have been seized by demons. Souls are ghosts, but with some cultivation, they can become spirits, which are *yang* in nature. With

more cultivation, they can become immortals. Cultivated to the ultimate, they become Buddhas. All these states of cultivation are achieved by the same individual soul.

Disciple: If a person is in a “vegetable,” or comatose, state or has lost some of his three souls and seven spirits, although his physical body is still intact, will the spirits and souls which have left him become another person?

Venerable Master: They don’t become another person; they simply go with the demons. That’s why the person is sometimes lucid, but sometimes very muddled.

Disciple: What if a cultivator who has sent out some of his three souls and seven spirits encounters Buddhas or Bodhisattvas?

Venerable Master: If a person is truly cultivating, there will be Dharma-protectors invisibly surrounding him. I have met a lot of strange people who can send spirits out of their bodies. Since you haven’t encountered such states, you wouldn’t recognize or understand them. For instance, the experience of those who act as mediums in Taiwan is described in the Fifty Skandha-demon States.

Disciple: Have they reached that level in their cultivation?

Venerable Master: They are advancing in their cultivation and creating merit. Like all people, some learn to be good and others learn to be bad. Those who learn to be bad join the retinue of the demon kings.

These ten souls, together with the **intellect, will, essence, and spirit will be able to interact with one another without affecting his body. They will take turns as host and guests.** They trade off roles and assist each other. They take turns playing the roles of the host and the guests.

Then he may suddenly hear the Dharma being spoken in space. Someone is lecturing on the sutras in space! Who is it? He can hear a voice, but he can’t see the person. In fact it is just his own spiritual and physical souls, his intellect will, essence and spirit

taking turns as host and guests to lecture. **Or perhaps he will hear esoteric truths being pronounced simultaneously throughout the ten directions**. Maybe you hear the Sutras and the Dharma being spoken in space! why? Because in your cultivation in previous lives, you heard the Sutras and the Dharma being spoken, and your spiritual and physical souls, intellect will, essence and spirit have not forgotten that. Thus, in this life, when the pressure in your cultivation reaches a peak, these past experiences come forth.

This state is called 'the essence and souls alternately separating and uniting and the planting of good seeds.' They cooperate with one another, coming together as one party or forming groups. They may speak the Dharma to enable you to understand what you didn't understand before, so that you can plant the seeds for future good roots.

It is a temporary, not a permanent, **state and does not indicate sagehood**. Don't get the idea that this state is extraordinary and say, "Look at me. I don't need to go to the Sutra lectures. I can hear the Dharma being spoken in space anytime I want." You may hear Dharma being spoken, but that doesn't mean you have realized sagehood. **If he does not think he has become a sage**, if you don't become arrogant and think yourself extraordinary, if you don't try to deceive others, **then this will be a good state**. Suppose you say, "Wow! I can hear the Dharma even when no one is lecturing the Sutras. Has that ever happened to you?"

"No."

"Well, it's happened to me!"

But if you advertise your state to get people to believe in you, what will happen? **If he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons' influence**. As soon as you become self-satisfied and attached, thinking you're really great, the demons will possess you and make you fall.

J4 The state changes and Buddhas appear.

Sutra:

“Further, when the person’s mind becomes clear, unveiled, bright, and penetrating, an internal light will shine forth and turn everything in the ten directions into the color of Jambu-river gold. All the various species of beings will be transformed into Tathagatas. Suddenly he will see Vairochana Buddha seated upon a platform of celestial light, surrounded by a thousand Buddhas, who simultaneously appear upon lotus blossoms in a hundred million lands. This state is called ‘the mind and soul being instilled with spiritual awareness.’ When he has investigated to the point of clarity, the light of his mind will shine upon all worlds. This is a temporary state and does not indicate sagehood. If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons’ influence.

Commentary:

Further, when the person’s mind becomes clear and pure, **unveiled** and manifest, **bright, and penetrating, an internal light will shine forth, and turn everything in the ten directions into the color of Jambu-river gold**. A bright light will emanate from within, and then the worlds of the ten directions will all take on the hue of Jambu-river gold. **All the various species of beings –** beings born from wombs, from eggs, from moisture, or by transformation, or any other kinds of beings – **will be transformed into Tathagatas**.

Suddenly, at this point, **he will see Vairochana Buddha**. Vairochana means “pervading everywhere” and is the name of the Buddha. He is not located anywhere, and yet there is no place where he is not present; his body is everywhere. This person suddenly sees Vairochana, the All-Pervasive Buddha, **seated on a platform of celestial light**, manifesting his ten-thousand-foot-tall body. Vairochana Buddha will be **surrounded by a thousand**

Buddhas, who simultaneously appear seated **upon** blue, yellow, red, and white **lotus blossoms in a hundred million lands**.

This state is called 'the mind and soul being instilled with spiritual awareness.' You should not think that this is real. Your mind and your physical soul are being influenced by a state of spiritual response and awakening. However, it is not real. **When he has investigated to the point of clarity, the light of his mind will shine upon all worlds**. when your mind comes to the point of understanding, it will illuminate all worlds.

This is a temporary state and does not indicate sagehood. What is happening will not last a long time. You have not become a sage. **If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons' influence**. If you say, "Incredible! I've seen Vairochana Buddha. Have you seen him? Your skill is not as profound as mine. I've made it!" Once you have such a thought the demon kings will come and drag you off to the hells.

J5 Space takes on the color of precious things.

Sutra:

"Further, as the person uses his mind to intently investigate that wondrous light, he will contemplate without pause, restraining and subduing his mind so that it does not go to extremes. Suddenly the space in the ten directions may take on the colors of the seven precious things or the colors of a hundred precious things, which simultaneously pervade everywhere without hindering one another. The blues, yellows, reds, and whites will each be clearly apparent. This state is called 'excessively subduing the mind.' It is a temporary state and does not indicate sagehood. If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons' influence.

Commentary:

Further, as the person uses his mind to intently investigate that wondrous light he will contemplate without pause, restraining and subduing his mind so that it does not go to extremes. He tries to curb his mind so that it does not become overzealous.

Suddenly the space in the ten directions may take on the colors of the seven precious things, or the colors of a hundred precious things, which will simultaneously pervade everywhere throughout space **without hindering one another**. They will be mutually unobstructing.

The blues, yellows, reds, and whites, the various colors, **will each be clearly apparent**. Each will display its own color. **This state is called 'excessively subduing the mind.'** You are cultivating to restrain your mind, not letting it engage in false thinking, not allowing it to have random thoughts. After the restraint occurs for a long time, it becomes excessive. You go beyond the proper measure. **It is a temporary state and does not indicate sagehood.** You will only temporarily be able to see the colors of the seven precious things in space, so this state does not mean you have attained sagehood.

If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. It will be all right; it will not be a bad state. **But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons' influence**. You will be surrounded by deviant influences, and you will fall.

J6 He can see things in the dark.

Sutra:

"Further, as the person uses his mind to investigate with clear discernment until the pure light no longer disperses, he will suddenly be able to see various things appear in a dark room at night, just as if it were daytime, while the objects that were already in the room do not disappear. This state is called

'refining the mind and purifying the vision until one is able to see in the dark.' It is a temporary state and does not indicate sagehood. If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons' influence.

Commentary:

Further, as the person uses his mind to investigate with clear discernment until the pure light no longer disperses… Again, this person uses his mind in samadhi to observe states, until the pure light of his discerning mind becomes very focused and he is endowed with samadhi power. **He will suddenly be able to see various things appear in a dark room** in a house which is not lighted **at night, just as if it were daytime, while the objects that were already in the room do not disappear**. Not only will he be able to see things that are inside the house, he will also be able to see things that are outside the house. Not only will he see what is already in the house, he will also see, with great clarity, the things that come into the house from outside.

This state is called 'refining the mind and purifying the vision until one is able to see in the dark.' Your mind is refined to the utmost extent and your vision is purified to the extreme point. With such pure vision, you will be able to see even in dark places. But **it is a temporary state and does not indicate sagehood**. You shouldn't think that this is the fruition of sagehood, because it certainly isn't!

If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons' influence. If you become conceited and think that you have achieved great skill in cultivation, you will attract demonic obstructions.

When some cultivators reach the state of ultimate purity and all-pervading light, they will suddenly see all kinds of things. That is because they have opened the Buddha Eye. However, not every person is able to open his Buddha Eye, and even if one does, it may

not stay open forever. In the state described here, the Buddha Eye opens temporarily, enabling one to see the objects in a dark house as if there were light. I also mentioned that you would be able to see things coming to the house from outside. What sort of things might these be? For example, you might see a spirit, a ghost, a Bodhisattva, or a Buddha coming into the dark house from outside. It's not for certain that you will experience these states.

Not everyone experiences such states, but some people might. These are states that may occur at some point in your cultivation. But don't think that all cultivators go through the same experiences, because that's not the case.

Some people open the Buddha Eye permanently. That is known as "a spiritual power that comes as a reward." Such people industriously cultivated the Dharma of the Thousand Hands and Thousand Eyes in previous lives, and as a result, they can open the Buddha Eye in life after life. Other people may only be able to open the Buddha Eye temporarily, because their minds are not in a perpetual state of purity. If their minds were constantly pure, and they had cultivated the Dharma of Great Compassion in their previous lives, they would be able to open the Buddha Eye permanently. There are a variety of differing circumstances in cultivation.

J7 His body becomes like grass or wood.

Sutra:

"Further, when his mind completely merges with emptiness, his four limbs will suddenly become like grass or wood, devoid of sensation even when burned by fire or cut with a knife. The burning of fire will not make his limbs hot and even when his flesh is cut, it will be like wood being whittled. This state is called 'the merging of external states and the blending of the four elements into a uniform substance.' It is a temporary state and does not indicate sagehood. If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons' influence.

Commentary:

Further, when his mind completely merges with emptiness, you may say that the mind exists, yet it doesn't you may say it doesn't exist, yet it does. **His four limbs will suddenly become like grass or wood, devoid of sensation even when burned by fire or cut with a knife**. If you cut his arms or legs with a knife or burn them with fire, he will not feel any pain or discomfort. **The burning of fire will not make his limbs hot**. When you try to burn them, they won't even become hot. **And even when his flesh is cut, it will be like wood being whittled**. If you slice off the flesh from his arms and legs, it will be just like shaving wood. He will feel no pain or irritation.

This state is called 'the merging of external states and the blending of the four elements into a uniform substance.' Defiled external states will come together, and the natures of earth, water, fire, and air will become a single substance. However, **it is a temporary state**, an occasional experience, **and does not indicate sagehood**. Do not think you have realized sagehood.

If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage and becomes self-satisfied and haughty, **then he will be vulnerable to the demons' influence**. You will be attacked and surrounded by hordes of deviant beings.

J8 He can see everywhere without obstruction.

Sutra:

"Further, when his mind accomplishes such purity that his skill in purifying the mind has reached its ultimate, he will suddenly see the earth, the mountains, and the rivers in the ten directions turn into Buddhalands replete with the seven precious things, their light shining everywhere. He will also see Buddhas, Tathagatas, as many as the sands of the Ganges, filling all of space. He will also see pavilions and palaces that are resplendent and beautiful. He will see the hells below and

the celestial palaces above, all without obstruction. This state is called 'the gradual transformation of concentrated thoughts of fondness and loathing.' It does not indicate sagehood. If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons' influence.

Commentary:

Further, when his mind accomplishes such purity that his skill in purifying the mind has reached its ultimate… Applying his mind to cultivation of the Way and to the practice of samadhi, he achieves a state of extreme purity. At that point, **he will suddenly see the earth, the mountains, and the rivers in the ten directions turn into Buddhalands replete with the seven precious things, their light shining everywhere**. Every place will be adorned with the seven precious things: gold, silver, lapis lazuli, mother-of-pearl, red pearls, carnelian and coral. These precious things will illumine the ten directions. **He will also see Buddhas, Tathagatas, as many as the sands of the Ganges** River, **filling all of space. He will also see** tower-**pavilions and** jeweled **palaces that are resplendent and beautiful. He will see the hells below**. Looking downwards, he will see all the hells. **And** looking upwards, he will see what is happening in **the celestial palaces above, all without** the least bit of **obstruction**. He is able to see any place he wishes to see.

This state is called 'the gradual transformation of concentrated thoughts of fondness and loathing.' Why is he able to see these things? It's because he ordinarily has likes and dislikes. He would like to go to the heavens and the Buddhalands, and he would detest going to the hells. He concentrates on such thoughts, being as attentive as a hen sitting on her eggs, as a cat waiting for a mouse, or as a dragon nurturing its pearl. He does not think about anything else, but only about how fine it is in the Buddha-lands, and how much suffering there is in the hells. His mind favors happy places

and loathes the places of suffering and misery. Eventually, his concentrated thoughts create these kinds of states.

It does not indicate sagehood. He should not think that he has attained sagehood and achieved great spiritual skill. **If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state**. It's not a bad one. **But if he considers himself a sage** and says, "what a terrific state! I'm living with the Buddhas. In fact, I'm a Buddha myself!" **then he will be vulnerable to the demons' influence**. If he thinks like that, the demons and the externalists will all go to keep him company. "You say you're living with the Buddhas? Well, we'll be your friends and join you," they say.

J9 He sees and hears distant things.

Sutra:

"Further, as the person uses his mind to investigate what is profound and far away, he will suddenly be able to see distant places in the middle of the night. He will see city markets and community wells, streets and alleys, and relatives and friends, and he may hear their conversations. This state is called 'having been suppressed to the utmost, the mind flies out and sees much that had been blocked from view.' It does not indicate sagehood. If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons' influence.

Commentary:

Further, as the person uses his mind to investigate what is profound and far away, he will suddenly be able to see various situations in **distant places in the middle of the night. He will see city markets** where things are sold on the street **and community wells** where people draw water, large **streets and** small **alleys**. He may see his **relatives and friends**, his associates, **and he may hear their conversations**; he will be able to listen to them talking.

This state is called 'having been suppressed to the utmost, the mind flies out and sees much that had been blocked from

view.’ In his cultivation, he restrained the mind from indulging in idle thinking. Having stifled the mind to the extreme, he experiences a sensation of flying out and seeing things no matter how far away they are. Usually he tries not to look at things, but now all of a sudden his mind breaks loose and he can see everything.

It does not indicate sagehood. He should not think that this is a good state. **If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good**, passable **state**. **But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons’ influence**. If he claims to have realized sagehood when he hasn’t, or if he claims to have attained what he hasn’t, he will find himself surrounded by demons.

J10 False visions and false words.

Sutra:

“Further, as the person uses his mind to investigate to the utmost point, he may see a Good and Wise Advisor whose body undergoes changes. Within a brief interval, various transformations will occur which cannot be explained. This state is called ‘having an improper mind which is possessed by a li-ghost, a mei-ghost, or a celestial demon, and without reason speaking Dharma that fathoms wondrous truths.’ It does not indicate sagehood. If he does not think he has become a sage, then the demonic formations will subside. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons’ influence.

Commentary:

This is the tenth demonic state of the form skandha, called “false visions and false words.”

Further, as the person uses his mind to investigate to the utmost point, he may see a Good and Wise Advisor with whom he studied the Dharma in the past, **whose body undergoes changes**. Right before his eyes, the Good and Wise Advisor suddenly turns into an old man; in the next moment he becomes a

middle-aged person; and, in another instant he turns into a young person. Then, if the Good and Wise Advisor is a man, for example, he suddenly changes into a woman, and the person thinks, “Oh! Probably in his previous life he was a woman.” Actually, what he is seeing is not real. These changes are the result of his false thinking.

Within a brief interval, various transformations will occur which cannot be explained. Everything changes and becomes different from normal. This is similar to what people who take LSD experience. To them, everything becomes brightly colored, and they cannot see clearly. They paint some bizarre paintings which no one can figure out, because they just recklessly splash on the colors. After they finish painting, some people say, “Wow! What a masterpiece!” People actually praise them. You see? That’s the Way it goes.

“Is it the case that this cultivator has taken a drug?” you ask.

No. This experience is caused by the demon king. When you take LSD, the demons are also at work, making you experience changes.

[January 1983]

Venerable Master: “In our investigation of the Fifty Skandha-demon States, everyone is welcome to bring up an opinion. We want to use everyone’s wisdom to investigate the principles. In the Dharma-ending Age, everyone is greedy for quick results and shortcuts. They think they can get a lucky break, just like people who gamble and win at the first try. So some people go running around to a lot of different places. They study esoteric practices and various other dharmas. They hear this place has something to offer, so they go there. Then they hear that place has something, so they run over there. Running here and there, they waste all their time on the road; but in the end, they don’t understand anything. We should all recognize this kind of state. If we don’t it will be very easy for us to go astray.”

Disciple: “It’s like taking drugs, which is a serious problem in Western society. You could say that hallucinogenic drugs are trans-

formation bodies of demons. The demons come up with a new form of drug and everyone becomes addicted to it. Even though people don't really need to take the drug, a demonic energy combined with their own habits causes them to get hooked. Nowadays there are many deviant teachers who, without the help of drugs, hypnotize people and cause them to see lights and various things. This happens because the drugs in people's bodies are acting up."

These states in the form skandha may change for the better and for the worse. If the person has enough good roots, the changes will be for the better. But people whose good roots are insufficient will change for the worse. There are all sorts of transformations.

This state is called 'having an improper and deviant **mind which is possessed by a li-ghost, a mei-ghost, or a celestial demon, and without reason speaking Dharma that fathoms wondrous truths.'** when a ghost or a demon from the heavens enters your mind, you may act like those people who claim they know how to lecture the Sutras or speak the Dharma, or who call themselves enlightened, elder masters. Such people start speaking the Dharma for no reason, with no idea what they are talking about. They say they have fathomed wondrous truths, but they have not really done so. They are not really speaking the Dharma either. They take what is wrong to be right and claim that their Dharma is the most wonderful. Praising themselves and putting others down, they call themselves the foremost elder masters.

It does not indicate sagehood. This state is not a good one. **If he does not think he has become a sage, then the demonic formations will subside**. They will disappear. **But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons influence**. If he thinks he has attained the fruition of a sage, he will soon find himself in the hells. He will attain the fruition of the hells.

I3 Conclusion on the harm, and command to offer protection.
J1 Showing how the states come about from interaction.

Sutra:

"Ananda, these ten states may occur in Dhyana as one's mental effort interacts with the form skandha.

Commentary:

Ananda, these ten states described above **may occur in** the still contemplation of **dhyana as one's mental effort interacts with the form skandha**. These states involve the form skandha. When the mind interacts with and investigates the form skandha to the ultimate, one may experience such states.

J2 Confusion will bring harm.

Sutra:

"Dull and confused living beings do not evaluate themselves. Encountering such situations, in their confusion they fail to recognize them and say that they have become sages, thereby uttering a great lie. They will fall into the Relentless Hells.

Commentary:

Dull and confused living beings do not evaluate themselves. Living beings are stubborn and intractable, and they do not wake up from their delusion. They do not take stock of themselves to see what level they are at. **Encountering such situations**, such demonic states, **in their** muddled **confusion they fail to recognize them and say that they have become sages**. They claim, "Oh, I am a Buddha! I am enlightened; I've attained sagehood," **thereby uttering a great lie**. They are really telling the greatest lie. **They will** surely **fall into the Relentless Hells**.

[January 1983]

We have to be very cautious in all aspects. As it's said, "If you're off by a hairsbreadth in the beginning, you'll miss by a thousand miles in the end." We keep studying the Buddhadharma, but we end up falling into the hells. Why? Because we haven't

really been able to follow the teachings. We haven't really been able to refrain from lying, stealing, sexual misconduct, taking intoxicants, and killing. If you can't even hold the five precepts, how can you think of accomplishing Buddhahood?

First of all, you must not km. That doesn't simply mean eating vegetarian food.

"I haven't killed any creature with my own hands," you may say.

That doesn't necessarily mean you haven't violated the precept of not killing. Holding this precept means you must not even harbor anger toward people in your heart. That is not easy to do. As I said earlier, "I also have a strong urge to kill. But I want to stop killing; I want to liberate creatures instead of killing them. If I wanted to kill creatures, all the fine hairs on my body could turn into flying swords, sharp knives, lances, and spears to stab people to death. That's how fierce my fine hairs could be. That's how powerful the urge to kill is, but I'm not going to kill. why not? Because I realize that killing living beings is equivalent to killing Bodhisattvas, killing Arhats, breaking up the harmonious Sangha, and shedding the Buddha's blood. That's why I don't kill."

Not stealing. Gaining something by improper means or taking something that does not belong to you without informing the owner is considered stealing. If you take something from its place without anyone knowing about it, you are stealing. The causes, conditions, methods, and karma of stealing are explained very clearly in the *Brahma Net Sutra*. The causes, conditions, methods and karma of killing are also explained dearly in that text.

Not engaging in sexual misconduct is also like that. It only counts if you don't have thoughts of lust in your mind and your own nature. To hold the precept against lying, you shouldn't lie under any circumstances. Nor should you take intoxicants. The stimulating effect of alcohol causes you to be unable to function normally. It also makes you lose your wisdom, and once that happens, you do stupid things.

These are the precepts of not killing, not stealing, not engaging in sexual misconduct, not lying, and not taking intoxicants. Buddhists should pay dose attention to these five precepts and avoid committing the slightest transgression; only then are they qualified to be called Buddhists. Some of you casually entertain thoughts of killing, stealing, engaging in sexual misconduct, and deceiving people with lies, and you casually take intoxicants. You are greedy for everything. Being greedy for food is equivalent to taking intoxicants. If you are so greedy for food that you eat until you're fat as can be, you are also taking intoxicants. We who study Buddhism should constantly examine ourselves on this point. We must be very attentive, without making the slightest mistake or being sloppy at any moment.

On the other hand, we should not be too rigid; we should apply the precepts in a flexible way.

"Then I can be a little more expedient; I can still kill, steal, engage in sexual misconduct, lie, and take intoxicants," you say.

That's not what flexibility means. It means we should not bind ourselves up with the five precepts so tightly that we have no room to turn around. When we receive the five precepts, we are not being bound up by the five precepts. We should look into this well. A certain person in Canada used my name to cheat his disciples, alleging that I certified him. People who tell great lies like that are bound to fall into the Hell of Ripping Out Tongues.

J3 Command to offer protection.

Sutra:

"In the Dharma-ending Age, after the Tathagata enters Nirvana, all of you should rely on and proclaim this teaching. Do not let the demons of the heavens have their way. Offer protection so all can realize the unsurpassed Way.

Commentary:

In the Dharma-ending Age, after the Tathagata enters Nirvana, all of you should rely on and proclaim this teaching.

Ananda, you all should follow and practice the Dharma that I have explained for you. In the future Dharma-ending Age, after I have entered Nirvana, you must propagate these teachings. **Do not let the demons of the heavens have their way. Offer protection so all can realize the unsurpassed Way**. Maintain and support the true and orthodox Buddhadharma so that you will be able to attain the supreme fruition of the Way.

CHAPTER 3

The Feeling Skandha

H2 The characteristics of demons of the feeling.
I1 Overview of the beginning and the end.
J1 In the beginning, cultivation has not yet broken out of this region.
K1 Review of the ending of the previous form skandha.

Sutra:

"Ananda, when the good person who is cultivating samadhi and shamatha has put an end to the form skandha, he can see the mind of all Buddhas as if seeing an image reflected in a clear mirror.

Commentary:

Ananda, when the good person who is cultivating samadhi, who cultivates the skill of directing the hearing inward to hear his own nature, who cultivates perfect understanding through the faculty of hearing, **and shamatha**, the quieting of thoughts, the practice of "stopping" so that contemplation is possible, **has put an end to the form skandha, he can see the mind of all Buddhas as if Seeing an image reflected in a clear mirror**. What happens when he puts an end to the form skandha? He can see the Dharma-door of the Mind Seal of all Buddhas, just as if he were seeing his own reflection in a mirror.

K2 Introduction to the region of the feeling skandha.

Sutra:

"He seems to have obtained something, but he cannot use it. In this he resembles a paralyzed person. His hands and feet are intact, his seeing and hearing are not distorted, and yet his mind has come under a deviant influence, so that he is unable to move. This is the region of the feeling skandha.

Commentary:

He seems to have obtained something, but he cannot use it. In this he resembles a paralyzed person. I talked before about the kumbhanda ghost (paralysis ghost). when a person falls under the influence of such a ghost, **his hands and feet are intact**, not missing, **his seeing and hearing are not distorted** or confused, **and yet his mind has come under a deviant influence, so that he is unable to move. This is the region of the feeling skandha**. This state falls within the realm of the feeling skandha.

J2 Ultimately it breaks up and reveals its false source.

Sutra:

"Once the problem of paralysis subsides, his mind can then leave his body and look back upon his face. It can go or stay as it pleases without further hindrance. This is the end of the feeling skandha. This person can then transcend the turbidity of views. Contemplating the cause of the feeling skandha, one sees that false thoughts of illusory clarity are its source.

Commentary:

Once the problem of being immobilized by the **paralysis** ghost **subsides, his mind can then leave his body and look back upon his face**. When you are within the feeling skandha, it is like being paralyzed by a kumbhanda ghost, so you cannot get free. If this situation disappears and the feeling skandha is broken through, your mind can leave your body and you can see your own face. **It can go or stay as it pleases**. You may go or not go as you wish. You

are completely unfettered and **without further hindrance. This is the end of the feeling skandha**. The feeling skandha is gone. **This person can then transcend the turbidity of views**, which is one of the turbidities of "the evil world of the five turbidities." **Contemplating the cause of the feeling skandha, one sees that false thoughts of illusory clarity are its source**. Once the feeling skandha is broken through, its source is also done away with.

I2 The ten states within this region.
J1 Suppression of the self leads to sadness.
K1 The characteristics of its beginning.

Sutra:

"Ananda, in this situation the good person experiences a brilliant light. As a result of the excessive internal pressure in his mind, he is suddenly overwhelmed with such boundless sadness that he looks upon even mosquitoes and gadflies as newborn children. He is filled with pity and unconsciously bursts into tears.

Commentary:

Ananda, in this situation the good person experiences a dazzling, **brilliant light. As a result of the excessive internal pressure in his mind**, a kind of feeling arises spontaneously. He has continually been controlling his own thoughts and has overdone it. When the inner suppression becomes excessive, **he is suddenly overwhelmed with such boundless sadness** and compassion for living beings **that he looks upon** and cherishes tiny creatures, **even mosquitoes and gadflies, as** if they were his own newborn children. The Chinese word for newborn means "red," referring to the red color of infant children's skin. **He is filled with pity and unconsciously bursts into tears**. Without knowing it, he starts to cry.

K2 Giving its name and instructions to awaken.

Sutra:

“This is called ‘overexertion in suppressing the mind in the course of cultivation.’ If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sage-hood. If he realizes that and remains unconfused, then after a time it will disappear.

K3 Showing how confusion will certainly bring a fall.

Sutra:

“But if he considers himself a sage, then a demon of sadness will enter his mind. Then, as soon as he sees someone, he will feel sad and cry uncontrollably. Lacking proper samadhi, he will certainly fall.

Commentary:

This is called ‘overexertion in suppressing the mind in the course of cultivation.’ This situation may arise in the course of cultivation. It happens because you have been suppressing your thoughts too hard. **If he understands, then there is no error**. If you understand and say to yourself, “why have I started crying for no reason? I should change this state,” then there will not be any problem. **This experience does not indicate sagehood**. It does not mean you have attained the Great Compassion of Oneness with All. Don’t think that caring for mosquitoes and other small creatures as if they were your own children is genuine Great Compassion of Oneness with All. **If he realizes that and remains unconfused**, then after a time it will disappear. The state will go away.

But if he considers himself a sage, if he says, “Oh! Now I have the Great Compassion of Oneness with All! My cultivation has really succeeded!” – then a demon of sadness that is an expert at crying will come. It cries no matter whom it meets. This demon will enter his mind and take possession of him. Then as soon as he sees someone, he will feel sad and cry uncontrollably, without knowing why he is so sad.

When I was in Manchuria I knew a woman named Liu Jintong who was like that whenever she met someone, she would start crying and say, "In the past, you were my son, and now you've come back. You've found your mother!" With her tears, she managed to confuse the other person into believing that he had actually met his mother. In fact, he'd encountered a demon.

Lacking proper samadhi, proper concentration, **he will certainly fall**. If you follow a demon, you will fall into the hells.

[December 2,1993] In the past Liu Jintong was possessed by the demons described in the Fifty Skandha-demon States, and now there are two others, one of whom is especially powerful because she knows a dharma for summoning spirits. A woman from San Jose who took refuge with me later went to study under her and contracted cancer upon her return. It was that person's doing. The San Jose woman came back to see me, but I paid no attention to her. Even if I were to do something to help her, I wouldn't let other people know.

J2 He praises himself as being equal to the Buddhas.
K1 The characteristics of its beginning.

Sutra:

"Further, Ananda, in this state of samadhi, the good person sees the disintegration of the form skandha and understands the feeling skandha. At that time he has a sublime vision and is overwhelmed with gratitude. In this situation, he suddenly evinces tremendous courage. His mind is bold and keen. He resolves to equal all Buddhas and says he can transcend three asamkhyeyas of eons in a single thought.

Commentary:

Further, Ananda, in this state of samadhi, the good person, which includes all good people who are cultivating the Way, **sees the disintegration of the form skandha and understands the feeling skandha**. Among the five skandhas, he knows that the form skandha is gone, and he is quite clear about the feeling skandha. **At**

that time he has a sublime vision and is overwhelmed with gratitude. A very special and rare vision appears in his mind, and he feels excessively grateful for it. However, excess is as bad as insufficiency. There is little difference between going too far and not going far enough. Neither is in accord with the Middle Way. For example, while traveling, if you go beyond your destination, it is the same as if you had not arrived at all.

In this situation, in this state of samadhi, **he suddenly evinces tremendous courage. His mind is bold and keen**, fearlessly vigorous. **He resolves to equal all Buddhas**, saying, "The Buddha and I are the same." **And** he **says he can transcend three asamkhyeyas** (limitless numbers) **of eons in a single thought**. He says that he can transcend the first, second, and third asamkhyeyas of eons in the space of a single thought. Therefore, he says he is a Buddha. Not only does he say he is a Buddha, he says everyone is a Buddha. Such a person has fallen prey to wrong knowledge and views. It's true that everyone is potentially a Buddha, but one has to cultivate in order to realize Buddhahood. Even when one cultivates, it is not possible to become a Buddha in a single thought. It takes a long time. Although the time can be shortened if one understands the Buddhadharma and practices according to it, one still cannot attain Buddha-hood in a single thought. This person cultivates, but he lacks wisdom and does not have a Good and Wise Advisor to instruct him. Although he works hard at cultivation, he develops wrong views along the way. Seeing that such a long time has passed without his becoming a Buddha, he simply states that he is a Buddha. This is the experience of "praising oneself as the equal of the Buddhas" that occurs during the breakdown of the feeling skandha. He says he is the same as all Buddhas. Actually, with that one mistaken thought, he is already possessed by a demon.

K2 Giving the name and instructions to awaken.

Sutra:

"This is called 'being too anxious to excel in cultivation.' If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sagehood.

K3 Showing how confusion will certainly bring a fall.

Sutra:

"If he realizes that and remains unconfused, then after a time it will disappear. But if he considers himself a sage, then a demon of insanity will enter his mind. As soon as he sees someone, he will boast about himself. He will become extraordinarily haughty, to the point that he recognizes no Buddha above him and no people below him. Lacking proper samadhi, he will certainly fall.

Commentary:

In the lecture on the *Shurangama Sutra*, we have now reached the very important section on the fifty kinds of deviant states caused by the five skandhas. If people who cultivate do not understand these fifty skandha demons, they will easily go astray in their cultivation. If you can recognize the states of these skandha demons, then you will not get carried away with reckless boasting and assume that you are an extraordinary individual. Therefore, I invite you to encourage your relatives and friends to come listen to this section on the fifty skandha demons, so they will know about the states which occur in cultivation.

This is called 'being too anxious to excel in cultivation.' This state occurs as a result of your efforts in cultivation. Because of this overexertion resulting from transformations within your own nature, you become courageous. There is nothing wrong with courage and vigor if you use them to advance in your cultivation of the Buddhadharma. But you must not become conceited and say, "Oh! I'm a Buddha myself" So you're a Buddha? The Buddha

spoke the Three Treasuries and the Twelve Divisions of the Canon. How many Treasuries and Divisions have you spoken? You don't even understand them, yet you say you are a Buddha. Isn't that absurd? The Buddha spoke the entire Canon, and you haven't spoken even a single Treasury or Division of the Canon, so how can you claim that you have become a Buddha? Even if you could explain the Treasuries and Divisions and understand their principles, at best you could call yourself a disciple of the Buddha, not a Buddha. But this person, feeling that everyone in the world reveres the Buddha, wants to be a Buddha, too, so that after he dies, people will make offerings to him. Actually, after death he will be buried in the ground. He will turn to dust and nothing will be left of him.

If he understands, then there is no error. It is all right to have such courage, as long as you understand that it is merely a state and does not mean you have become a sage. **This experience does not indicate sagehood. If he realizes that and remains unconfused then after a time it will disappear**.

But if he considers himself a sage, saying, "Oh, this means I've become a Buddha!" **then a demon of insanity will enter his mind**. So you see, if you do not even recognize the fifty skandha demons, how can you become a Buddha? This demon is one of arrogance, pride, and conceit. It bores into his mind and takes possession of him, driving out his soul. The demon king takes over and acts as his soul. **As soon as he sees someone**, no matter who the person is, **he will boast about himself** and how he is right and everyone else is wrong. He denigrates others to exalt himself. They are all in the wrong, and he alone is honored; he thinks he has become a Buddha!

He will become extraordinarily haughty toward everyone, **to the point that he recognizes no Buddha above him**. There are no Buddhas above. Why? Because he's a Buddha himself. **And** he sees **no people below him**. Then what does he see? He says that everyone is a Buddha, that he himself is a Buddha, and that there is

no Buddha above him. He himself is Buddha, and in the future everyone will become a Buddha along with him. That is why he sees no people below. **Lacking** the **proper** state of **samadhi, he will certainly fall**.

J3 Samadhi out of balance brings much reverie.
K1 The characteristics of its beginning.

Sutra:

"Further, in this state of samadhi the good person sees the disintegration of the form skandha and understands the feeling skandha. With no new realization immediately ahead of him, and having lost his former status as well, his power of wisdom weakens, and he enters an impasse in which he sees nothing to anticipate. Suddenly a feeling of tremendous monotony and thirst arises in his mind. At all times he is fixated in memories that do not disperse. He mistakes this for a sign of diligence and vigor.

Commentary:

Further, in this state of samadhi the good person who cultivates the Way **sees the disintegration of the form skandha and understands the feeling skandha. With no new realization immediately ahead of him, and having lost his former status as well, his power of wisdom weakens.** Going forward, there is nothing new to attain; and behind him, the state where he dwelled before is also gone. His wisdom is inadequate now, and he isn't as bold and keen as before. This is a case of suddenly advancing and then suddenly retreating in one's skill. And he enters an impasse, a place where he is about to fall, in which he sees nothing to anticipate. He does not feel or see anything.

Suddenly a feeling of tremendous monotony and thirst arises in his mind. His feeling is one of enormous monotony, dryness, and thirst. He feels everything is meaningless and boring, and he is thirsty because he needs to be moistened by the water of the Buddhadharma. He feels he is drying up and withering away because, for him, there is nothing at all. This is similar to the way

ordinary people who do not cultivate start to feel lonely and bored. This loneliness and boredom are sure to lead to trouble, the same old trouble. I did not intend to bring this up, but because I'm afraid people might not understand, I will still talk about it. It is as when a woman thinks about a man. She keeps thinking about him until she feels incredibly anxious and restless. When men think about women, they also have this feeling of restlessness. They are lonely and bored, as if they have lost something which they cannot find.

At all times he is fixated in memories that do not disperse. It is the way a man and a woman who are lovesick for each other keep thinking and thinking about each other and never forget. **He mistakes this for a sign of diligence and vigor.** This state of fixation on thoughts that don't disperse appears to him to indicate vigor.

K2 Giving the name and instructions to awaken.

Sutra:

"This is called 'cultivating the mind but losing oneself due to a lack of wisdom.' If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sagehood.

K3 Showing how confusion will certainly bring a fall.

Sutra:

"But if he considers himself a sage, then a demon of memory will enter his mind. Day and night it will hold his mind suspended in one place. Lacking proper samadhi, he will certainly fall.

Commentary:

Within the states of the feeling skandha, **this is called 'cultivating the mind but losing oneself due to a lack of wisdom.'** You don't have any wisdom. But don't worry about having no wisdom, for **if he understands, then there is no error**. If you realize that it's only a state, then there is no problem. But if you don't understand, and you are always getting attached to

emptiness and caught up in stillness, if you are always lost in reverie, then you will wither away without any accomplishment. **This experience does not indicate sagehood**. This does not mean you have attained something or have realized sagehood. Do not "mistake a thief for your son."

But if he considers himself a sage, then a demon of memory will enter his mind. Did you hear that! This is truly dangerous! If you consider it a fine state, a demon of memory will come and help you remember things. So you can't remember something? It will help you to think. It sees how much you would like to remember, so it comes to help you and enters into your mind. **Day and night it will hold his mind suspended in one place**. Your mind will be preoccupied and kept in one spot. **Lacking proper samadhi**, unable to attain samadhi, **he will certainly fall** into the hells in the future.

J4 Wisdom out of balance brings much arrogance.
K1 The characteristics of its beginning.

Sutra:

"Further, in this state of samadhi, the good person sees the disintegration of the form skandha and understands the feeling skandha. His wisdom becomes stronger than his samadhi, and he mistakenly becomes impetuous. Cherishing the supremacy of his nature, he imagines that he is a Nishyanda (Buddha) and rests content with his minor achievement.

Commentary:

Further, in this state of samadhi, the good person sees the disintegration of the form skandha and understands the feeling skandha. His wisdom becomes stronger than his samadhi. His wisdom power exceeds his samadhi power.

And he mistakenly becomes impetuous. He experiences a feeling of rash vigor. **Cherishing the supremacy of his nature, he imagines that he is a Nishyanda (Buddha)**. In this state, he considers his nature to be supreme and extraordinary, and he is

always thinking about it. Cherishing this thought of supremacy, he suspects himself to be a Nishyanda Buddha. “Nishyanda” is Sanskrit and means “Light Shining Everywhere.” He thinks he is already a Nishyanda Buddha **and rests content with his minor achievement**. He has made a little progress, and he becomes satisfied. His samadhi-power falls way short of the Buddha’s, and yet he claims he has become a Nishyanda Buddha.

K2 Giving the name and instructions to awaken.

Sutra:

“This is called ‘applying the mind, but straying away from constant examination and becoming preoccupied with ideas and opinions.’ If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sagehood.

K3 Showing how confusion will certainly bring a fall.

Sutra:

“But if he considers himself a sage, then a lowly demon that is easily satisfied will enter his mind. As soon as he sees someone, he will announce, ‘I have realized the unsurpassed absolute truth.’ Lacking proper samadhi, he will certainly fall.

Commentary:

This is called ‘applying the mind, but straying away from constant examination – he is not skilled at constantly examining himself **– and becoming preoccupied with ideas and opinions.’** Unable to clearly distinguish what he knows and thinks, he gets caught up and stuck in his own ideas and opinions. **If he understands, then there is no error**. There will not be any problem. **This experience does not indicate sagehood**.

But if he considers himself a sage and thinks that he has realized some supreme state, **then a lowly demon**, a most vile and worthless sort of demon **that is easily satisfied** with any situation, **will enter his mind**. It will bore into his mind and take possession of him, driving out his soul. All that will be left is a false shell of a

person, but he will not realize that. **As soon as he sees someone, he will announce**, “Hey! Do you know? **I have realized the unsurpassed**, the highest, **absolute truth.**”

Now there is a character who stands on Grant Avenue in Chinatown, in the heart of the San Francisco business district, dressed in a flashy and colorful costume. He tells people, “I lived in the mountains for five years and became enlightened. Now I have such-and-such spiritual powers.” Earlier he took me as his teacher and became my disciple. But he did not follow what I taught him. Before I came to America, guess what he did? He carried a big gourd on his back with a sign painted on it that proclaimed he was my disciple and that he had learned many skills from me. Further, he claimed he could solve any problem people might bring him. He used my name to swindle others before I arrived in this country. Now that I am here in America, he is still cheating people, but he no longer uses my name. This is the very kind of demon the Sutra is talking about here. He claimed to have attained the absolute truth.

Lacking proper samadhi, he will certainly fall. He has lost the proper state of concentration, and he doesn’t follow what I taught him, either. Since I arrived here, he has never come to listen to the Sutra lectures or Dharma talks, but just says he has attained the Way, is enlightened, and has spiritual powers. Ultimately what are his spiritual powers? You would never guess. They are money, money, money! He swindles people. I don’t know why he wants so much money! Therefore, he will certainly fall.

J5 Passing through danger leads to anxiety.
K1 The characteristics of its beginning.

Sutra:

“Further, in this state of samadhi the good person sees the disintegration of the form skandha and understands the feeling skandha. He has not yet obtained any results, and his prior state of mind has already disappeared. Surveying the two extremes, he feels that he is in great danger. Suddenly he becomes greatly distraught, as if he were seated on the Iron

Bed, or as if he has taken poison. He has no wish to go on living, and he is always asking people to take his life so he can be released sooner.

Commentary:

Further, in this state of samadhi, the good person, the cultivator, now with somewhat deeper power in samadhi, **sees the disintegration of the form skandha and under-stands the feeling skandha. He has not yet obtained any** of the **results** that he should obtain from his cultivation of the Way, **and** so **his prior state of mind has already disappeared. Surveying the two extremes**, past and future, he finds both are gone, and **he feels he is in great danger**. He thinks, “Oh no, this is really dangerous! It’s too terrible!” Suddenly he becomes greatly distraught. He feels worried and afflicted about everything. The worries lead to afflictions, and what is it like to have afflictions? It’s **as if he were seated on the Iron Bed**. From morning to night he thinks to himself, “Oh, I’m in the hells sitting on the Iron Bed! What can I do? To have this body is to suffer.” Or he feels **as if he has taken poison** and is about to die. **He has wish to go on living**. All day long he thinks, “I’d be better off dead. I’d be better off dead.” In China, there is a saying “I’d be better off dead. I’d be better off dead. It would save on pants and coats.” This person probably thinks that way, so he says, “rd be better off dead. I’d be better off dead.”

Ghosts are involved in most suicide cases. The ghost bows to the person and then recites a mantra, but the person does not hear the ghost reciting. The meaning of the mantra is, “You’d be better off dead! You’d be better off dead! Hurry up and die. The sooner you die the better.” Even though the person contemplating suicide cannot hear it with his ears, subconsciously it penetrates his mind. Since ghosts have the spiritual power of knowing others’ thoughts, they can use their demonic energy to get into your mind and persuade you to want to die. Your mind hears the ghost and believes what it says. Then you may take poison, hang yourself, cast

yourself into the ocean, or jump off the Golden Gate Bridge. That's how you die! There are lots of ghosts around the Golden Gate Bridge. They dare not bother you if you are full of *yang* energy. But if someone comes along whose *yang* energy is weak, who is lacking in essence, energy, and spirit, the ghosts say, "You'd be better off dead. You'd be better off dead," and get the person to jump off the Golden Gate Bridge. Most suicides are caused by demonic ghosts that provoke people into taking their own lives. **And he**, the person who experiences tremendous anxiety, **is always asking people to take his life so he can be released sooner**. He is always saying to people, "Kill me! If you have a way to do me in, that would be great! I'll be free!"

K2 Giving the name and instructions to awaken.

Sutra:

"This is called 'cultivating, but not understanding expedients.' If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sagehood.

K3 Showing how confusion will certainly bring a fall.

Sutra:

"But if he considers himself a sage, then a demon of chronic depression will enter his mind. He may take up knives and swords and cut his own flesh, happily giving up his life. Or else, driven by constant anxiety, he may flee into the wilderness and be unwilling to see people. Lacking proper samadhi, he will certainly fall.

Commentary:

This is called 'cultivating, but not understanding expedients.' Since the person does not understand the Dharmadoors of expedient means, he develops this attachment. After developing it **if he understands, then there is no error**, no problem. **This experience does not indicate sagehood**. This does not mean he has become a sage.

Having heard these principles in the Sutra, you should be extremely careful not to casually indulge in random thoughts. Do not start thinking thatyou want to die, or that you cannot get what you want. If you keep thinking like that, you will attract this kind of demon. There are a great many of them in the world, so you should not indulge in random thoughts or speak carelessly. If you do, this demon may possess you. When that happens, you will not be able to endure it. You will not be free, and even if you do not want to die, there will be no way to avoid it.

But if he considers himself a sage, then there will be **a demon of chronic depression**. So you think you're depressed? Depression also involves demons. Why are you depressed or angry? If you have opened the Buddha Eye, you see that when a person is not angry, there is no ghost but as soon as he gets angry, a ghost comes to goad him on, saying, "Get angrier, get madder! Make more trouble!" Behind the scenes, it urges you to lose your temper. Even if you don't believe me, what I am saying is true. If you do not believe it, just take your time and try it out.

The demon **will enter his mind** and possess his body. **He may take up knives and swords and cut his own flesh**. Did I not tell you about Filial Son Wang (Great Master Chang Ren), who practiced filiality beside his parents' graves? Once, while in samadhi, Filial Son Wang saw that bandits had captured his nephew and were about to shoot him. Filial Son Wang was about five miles away. But just as the bandit was about to pull the trigger, from within samadhi he used his hand to ward off the gun so that the shot missed his nephew, who was able to escape. Behind this incident there was a ghost that wanted the nephew's life, and it had caused the bandits to tie the boy up and try to kill him. Those were the causes and effects involved. When Filial Son Wang thwarted the ghost in its efforts to kill his nephew, the ghost went after Filial Son Wang, but could not do anything to him. Then it went to find his younger brother, Wang Erye, and possessed him instead. Taking a knife, the brother went to find Filial Son Wang at the graveside, intending to commit suicide in front of him.

The ghost wanted to kill the younger brother, but strangely, as it held the knife poised, ready to behead the younger brother, it could not bring the hand down. Meanwhile, Filial Son Wang was reciting the *Vajra Sutra* and holding a vow of silence. As he recited it silently, my teacher (Great Master Chang Thi), who had not yet left the home-life, felt very agitated, as if there were some crisis. He felt trepidation and could not put his mind at ease. He wondered, "Is there something going on with the Filial Son by the grave?" He rushed over there immediately to take a look, and sure enough, Wang Erye was holding a knife about to behead himself. Filial Son Wang wrote a few words telling my teacher, "Buy some paper for burning. (There is a Chinese custom of burning paper money for the dead.) I will recite Sutras for the ghost and liberate it. There is a ghost involved here, and it wants to do such-and-such." After Filial Son Wang recited Sutras and liberated the ghost, there were no more problems.

On the one hand this is an example of the demon under discussion. But in this case the ghost came because it wanted someone's life, not because of cultivation. But you could also say it is from cultivation. Because Filial Son Wang cultivated and got too involved in someone else's business, he ended up with this kind of demon trying to kill his younger brother. The ghost couldn't kill Filial Son Wang because he had samadhi power and did not have any false thinking. The ghost couldn't do anything to him, so it went after his younger brother.

Happily giving up his life, he may wish to die. **Or else**, he may be **driven by constant** incredible **anxiety**. Now that you've heard this passage, take care not to be unhappy all the time. Do not always cry and feel melancholy. If you keep feeling worried and depressed, this demon will take possession of you. That is based half on the demon's power and half on your own. The demon avails itself of your energy. If your thoughts are proper, there will be no problems. But if your thinking is improper, you will be influenced by the demon. If it tells you, "Worry," you worry, and you become more and more worried, until you flee into the mountains, refusing to see

people. **And, unable to tolerate people, he may flee into the mountain forests. Lacking proper samadhi, he will certainly fall**. Such a person will fall into the hells in the future.

J6 Experiencing ease leads to joy.
K1 The characteristics of its beginning.

Sutra:

"Further, in this state of samadhi, the good person sees the disintegration of the form skandha and understands the feeling skandha. As he dwells in this purity, his mind is tranquil and at ease. Suddenly a feeling of boundless joy wells up in him. There is such bliss in his mind that he cannot contain it.

Commentary:

Further, in this state of samadhi, the good person sees the disintegration of the form skandha and understands the feeling skandha. As he dwells in this purity of samadhi, his mind is tranquil and at ease. His mind is exceptionally calm and settled, without any scattered thoughts. Right at that point, the feeling skandha produces another effect in him. **Suddenly a feeling of boundless joy wells up in him**. He feels a happiness that knows no bounds. **There is such** extreme **bliss in his mind that** its extent cannot be known, and **he cannot contain it**. Even if he wants to stop the joy, he cannot.

K2 Giving the name, and instructions to awaken.

Sutra:

"This is called, 'experiencing lightness and ease, but lacking the wisdom to control it.' If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sagehood.

Commentary:

This is called, 'experiencing lightness and ease, but lacking the wisdom to control it.' He does not have the wisdom to control his own happiness. **If he understands, then there is no error**. If you realize what it is, then there is no problem. **This experience**

does not indicate sagehood. This does not mean that you have become a sage.

K3 Showing how confusion will certainly bring a fall.

Sutra:

"But if he considers himself a sage, then a demon that likes happiness will enter his mind. As soon as he sees someone, he will laugh. He will sing and dance in the streets. He will say that he has already attained unobstructed liberation. Lacking proper samadhi, he will certainly fall.

Commentary:

But if he considers himself a sage – if you say, "Oh, now I've entered the Ground of Happiness! I'm a Bodhisattva of the Ground of Happiness!" **– then a demon that likes happiness will enter his mind. As soon as he sees someone, he will laugh** uproariously. **He will sing and dance in the streets**. Like a hippie, he gets totally carried away, waving his arms and stamping his feet singing and dancing, making all kinds of music. **He will say that he has already attained unobstructed liberation. Lacking proper samadhi he will certainly fall**. He loses his proper concentration, his proper knowledge and views, and his powers of reasoning; and eventually, he will fall into the hells.

J7 Seeing the sublime and becoming proud.
K1 The characteristics of its beginning.

Sutra:

"Further, in this state of samadhi, the good person sees the disintegration of the form skandha and understands the feeling skandha. He says he is already satisfied. Suddenly, a feeling of unreasonable, intense self-satisfaction may arise in him. It may include pride, outrageous pride, haughty pride, overweening pride, and pride based on inferiority, all of which occur at once. In his mind, he even looks down on the Tathagatas of the ten directions, how much the more so on the lesser positions of Hearers and Those Enlightened by Conditions.

Commentary:

Further, in this state of samadhi, the good person sees the disintegration of the form skandha and understands the feeling skandha. He says he is already satisfied. He feels he already has enough of everything; he's already realized the fruition, become enlightened, and become a Buddha. **Suddenly, a feeling of unreasonable, intense self-satisfaction may arise in him.** Self-satisfaction is a form of haughtiness. He respects no one. He looks down on everyone and thinks no one is as good as he is. **It may include pride –** arrogance; **outrageous pride**, which is extreme arrogance; **haughty pride –** there is no greater arrogance than this; **overweening pride –** pride added to pride; **and pride based on inferiority**-feeling that everyone is inferior to him and looking down on everyone. These are different kinds of pride, **all of which occur at once**.

In his mind, he even looks down on the Tathagatas of the ten directions. To what extent does his pride go? Not only is he arrogant toward people, he is arrogant toward the Buddhas, so he regards even the Tathagatas of the ten directions with contempt, feeling they are not as good as he is. How serious would you say this pride is? It's really difficult to deal with! **How much the more so on the lesser positions of Hearers and Those Enlightened by Conditions.** He looks down on them even more. His attitude is, "You're nothing but an Arhat of the Small Vehicle! What's so special about you?" He thinks he's higher than the Buddha, but he hasn't come up with another name yet.

K2 Giving the name and instructions to awaken.

Sutra:

"This is called 'viewing oneself as supreme, but lacking the wisdom to save oneself.' If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sagehood.

Commentary:

This is called 'viewing oneself as supreme.' It is an occasional state that occurs in the feeling skandha. **But** it involves **lacking the wisdom to save oneself.** The person doesn't have the wisdom to save himself. **If he understands, then there is no error.** If he understands that this is an error, then the demon will not have its way with him. As it is said, "If you understand, then you won't be confused; but when you are confused, you lack understanding." If you understand, it is like taking a sword of wisdom and hacking through the confusion. **This experience does not indicate sagehood.** It does not mean you have realized sagehood.

K3 Showing how confusion will certainly bring a fall.

Sutra:

"But if he considers himself a sage, then a demon of intense arrogance will enter his mind. He will not bow to stupas or in temples. He will destroy Sutras and images. He will say to the Danapatis, 'These are gold, bronze, clay, or wood. The Sutras are just leaves or cloth. The flesh body is what is real and eternal, but you don't revere it; instead you venerate clay and wood. That is totally absurd.' Those who have deep faith in him will follow him to destroy the images or bury them. He will mislead living beings so that they fall into the Relentless Hells. Lacking proper samadhi, he will certainly fall.

Commentary:

But if he considers himself a sage, if you say that this is a good state, **then a demon of intense arrogance**, an extremely haughty demon, **will enter his mind** and possess him. **He will not bow to stupas or in temples**. He will not bow to Buddhas or stupas when he sees them. Nor will he make obeisance when he goes into temples. **He will destroy Sutras and images**. He will burn sutras and break images of the Buddhas. Destroying sutras and images are offenses that lead to the hells. But he will say, "These things are all false."

He will say to the Danapatis… He has his own disciples, and he tells his disciples these things. *Dana* means giving and *pati* means to transcend, so in Buddhism, one who makes offerings to the Triple Jewel is called a danapati. He says to his own danapatis and followers, **"These are gold, bronze, clay, or wood. The Sutras are just leaves or cloth."** Buddha images are made of gold, or of bronze; or they may be constructed of clay or wood. Sutras are written out on leaves, or on silk or cotton cloth. "What's the use of worshipping them? They have no consciousness. **The flesh body is what is real and eternal.** This flesh body of mine is real, **but you don't revere it**, you don't revere me; **instead you venerate clay and wood**. You'd rather bow to idols of clay and wood, what's the use of that? It would be better for you to bow to me than to them. **That is totally absurd**. What awareness do those pieces of wood have? It's ridiculous for you to bow to them!"

Those followers **who have deep faith in him**, who deeply believe in him, **will follow him to destroy the** Buddha **images** and burn the Sutras, **or** to **bury them** in the ground. Through such behavior, **he will mislead living beings so that** they will not believe in Buddhism, but will have doubts instead. He will hinder them like that, and **they** will definitely **fall into the Relentless Hells. Lacking proper samadhi, he will certainly fall**.

J8 With wisdom comes lightness and ease, which leads to complacency.
K1 The characteristics of its beginning.

Sutra:

"Further, in this state of samadhi, the good person sees the disintegration of the form skandha and understands the feeling skandha. In his refined understanding, he awakens completely to subtle principles. Everything is in accord with his wishes. He may suddenly experience limitless lightness and ease in his mind. He may say that he has become a sage and attained great self-mastery.

K2 Giving the name and instructions to awaken.

Sutra:

"This is called 'attaining lightness and clarity due to wisdom.' If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sagehood.

Commentary:

Further, in this state of samadhi, the good person sees the disintegration of the form skandha and understands the feeling skandha. In his refined understanding – his understanding becomes even more refined than before **– he awakens completely to subtle principles**. At this time, he gains a thorough understanding of very fine and subtle principles. **Everything is in accord with his wishes. He may suddenly experience** a state of **limitless lightness and ease in his mind. He may say that he has become a sage,** a Buddha, **and obtained great self-mastery,** the greatest happiness and ease.

This is called 'attaining lightness and clarity due to wisdom.' Having uncovered a little wisdom, you obtain a state of lightness and purity, and that's all-it certainly does not count as an extraordinary state. **If he understands, then there is no error**, no problem. **This experience does not indicate sagehood**. You should not think this state is the realization of sagehood, for it is not.

K3 Showing how confusion will certainly bring a fall.

Sutra:

"But if he considers himself a sage, then a demon that likes lightness and clarity will enter his mind. Claiming that he is already satisfied, he will not strive to make further progress. For the most part, such cultivators will become like the Unlearned Bhikshu. He will mislead living beings so that they will fall into the Avichi Hell. Lacking proper samadhi, he will certainly fall.

Commentary:

But if he considers himself a sage – if, upon having this state of light ease, he thinks he has already been certified to the fruition of sagehood-**then a demon that likes lightness and clarity will enter his mind.** This demon, who also experiences the state of light ease and sublime clarity, will possess the person. **Claiming that he is already satisfied**, that he has perfected everything, **he will not strive to make further progress**. Above there is no Buddhahood to accomplish, and below there are no living beings to save. He does not need to become a Buddha, for he has already become one. Nor does he need to save living beings, for he has already finished saving them. He has already accomplished the Buddhahood he was supposed to accomplish, and he has saved the living beings he was meant to save. There-fore, he does not seek further progress.

For the most part, such cultivators will become like the unlearned Bhikshu mentioned earlier. Lacking wisdom, he thought the Fourth Dhyana was the fourth fruition of Arhatship. **He will mislead living beings**, so they do not know the proper path and do not recognize the Buddhadharma. He confuses and hinders living beings, **so that they will fall into the Avichi Hell**. In the future, this sort of person will fall into the Relentless Hells. why? **Lacking proper samadhi, he will certainly fall**. Since he has lost his proper samadhi, he is bound to fall into the Relentless Hells.

J9 Becoming attached to emptiness and slandering precepts.
K1 The characteristics of its beginning.

Sutra:

"Further in this state of samadhi, the good person sees the disintegration of the form skandha and understands the feeling skandha. In that clear awakening, he experiences an illusory clarity. Within that, suddenly he may veer towards the view of eternal extinction, deny cause and effect, and take everything as empty. The thought of emptiness so predominates that he comes to believe that there is eternal extinction after death.

K2 Giving its name and instructions to awaken.

Sutra:

"[This is called 'the mental state of samadhi dissolving so that one loses sight of what is right.'] If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sagehood.

Commentary:

Further in this state of samadhi, the good person sees the disintegration of the form skandha and understands the feeling skandha. At that time, **in that clear awakening**, when he seems to understand but does not truly understand, **he experiences an illusory clarity**, which is not real. **Within that** illusory clarity, **suddenly** a change occurs. What is it? **He may veer towards the view of eternal extinction, deny cause and effect, and take everything as empty.** He says, "When a person dies, he is gone and dead forever. Therefore, to talk in terms of cause and effect is incorrect. There is no cause and effect. When people die, they no longer exist, so how could there be cause and effect? Everything is empty. Committing offenses is empty and so is creating blessings. It is all empty!" **The thought of emptiness so predominates that he comes to believe that there is eternal extinction after death.** The more he thinks, the more he feels he's right. "Oh! It is empty. Once you die, it is all over. Everything is empty." At that point, he becomes convinced that people are gone forever after they die.

The text reads: "If he understands, then there is no error. It is hot an indication of sagehood." One sentence must have been left out of the text when it was originally copied. We can insert it here: **This is called 'the mental state of samadhi dissolving so that one loses sight of what is right.'** At this point, his samadhi is gone, so he develops the thought of emptiness and loses his sense of what is right. **If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sagehood.** This is not the state of realizing sagehood.

K3 Showing how confusion will certainly bring a fall.

Sutra:

“But if he considers himself a sage, then a demon of emptiness will enter his mind. He will slander the holding of precepts, calling it a ‘Small Vehicle Dharma.’ He will say, ‘Since Bodhisattvas have awakened to emptiness, what is there to hold or violate?’ This person, in the presence of his faithful danapatis, will often drink wine, eat meat, and engage in wanton lust. The power of the demon will keep his followers from doubting or denouncing him. After the ghost has possessed him for a long time, he may consume excrement and urine, or meat and wine, claiming that all such things are empty. He will break the Buddha’s moral precepts and mislead people into committing offenses. Lacking proper samadhi, he will certainly fall.

Commentary:

But if he considers himself a sage, if he views this as certifying to the fruition of sagehood, **then a demon of emptiness will enter his mind**. It will enter and possess his body. **He will slander the holding of precepts, calling it a “Small Vehicle Dharma.”** He will say, “Don’t observe the precepts. That’s a Dharma for the Small Vehicle. Great Vehicle Bodhisattvas do not have so many bothersome restrictions. You don’t have to pay attention to them. As it is said, ‘The great elephant does not travel along the rabbit’s path. The great awakening is not confined by petty details.’ Once you are greatly enlightened, nothing matters anymore. Everything is empty. ‘Wine and meat pass through the intestines; the Buddha dwells in the mind.’ To the Buddha, everything is made from the mind alone. The mind is just the Buddha, and the Buddha is just the mind!” That’s what he says. He even slanders the holding of precepts, saying, “Only adherents of the Small Vehicle observe precepts. Followers of the Great Vehicle do not need this.”

Actually, the precepts for the Great Vehicle are even more explicit and even less should one violate them. He just fools these uninformed people, who have never studied the Buddhadharma and do not understand any of the principles explained by the Buddha. That's why, no matter what he says, they take it as an order to be followed, believing that what he says is right. Why do they believe him? Just because they have never heard the Buddhadharma and don't even know what the Buddhadharma is.

He will say, "Since Great Vehicle **Bodhisattvas have** already **awakened to** the **emptiness** of all dharmas, **what is there to hold or violate?** How can there still be a holding of precepts or a violating of precepts? There's no such thing." **This person** who is possessed by the demon, **in the presence of his faithful danapatis**, in the homes of Dharma-protectors who believe in him, **will often drink wine, eat meat and engage in wanton lust**. The phrase "engage in wanton lust" is very important. Buddhism teaches people not to have lust and desire, yet his desire is excessive. He engages in defiled practices of lust, yet people still believe in him because he has a demonic power. **The power of the demon will keep his followers from doubting or denouncing him**. They have tremendous faith in him.

After the ghost has possessed him for a long time, he may consume excrement and urine or meat and wine, claiming that all such things are empty. Because he is possessed by a ghost, he will not think of excrement as something unclean, and he will also casually drink urine. He will say that eating excrement and drinking urine are "neither defiled nor pure," using the phrase from the *Heart Sutra*. That's how he will distort the Sutra's meaning. This demon will behave in a way which shows that he doesn't care whether something is clean or dirty. He will say that eating meat and drinking wine are empty, and that eating excrement and drinking urine are empty. In general, everything is empty. **He will break the Buddha's moral precepts and mislead people into committing offenses. Then, lacking proper samadhi, he will certainly fall.** He deserves to fall into the hells.

J10 Becoming attached to existence and indulging in lust.
K1 The characteristics of its beginning.

Sutra:

"Further, in this state of samadhi, the good person sees the disintegration of the form skandha and understands the feeling skandha. He savors the state of illusory clarity, and it deeply enters his mind and bones. Boundless love may suddenly well forth from his mind. When that love becomes extreme, he goes insane with greed and lust.

K2 Giving its name and instructions to awaken.

Sutra:

"This is called 'when an agreeable state of samadhi enters one's mind, lacking the wisdom to control oneself and mistakenly engaging in lustful behavior.' If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sagehood.

Commentary:

Further, in this state of samadhi, when the cultivator has attained the samadhi of the feeling skandha, **the good person sees the disintegration of the form skandha –** the form skandha is gone **– and** he **understands the feeling skandha**, being clear about it. **He savors the state of illusory clarity** which he has already attained, **and** now **it deeply enters his mind and bones**. A mental transformation may suddenly occur. What transformation? A **boundless**, immeasurable **love may suddenly well forth from his mind**. This is like a certain person who says he loves everyone. He has the kind of temperament being discussed. **When that love** and desire in his mind build up and **become extreme, he goes insane with greed and lust**. He cannot control his emotions. When he goes crazy, he is just like the woman Liu Jintong I mentioned earlier. Seeing a man, she would hug him, and cry, and make all sorts of seductive gestures. She was an example of this type of demon. How could the average man remain unmoved by such

tricks? After she had confused him, she would tell him, “Take this amount of money and buy me that piece of jewelry,” and he would say, “Okay, okay.” Then she would say, “Take that amount of money and buy me that other thing,” and he would agree to do it. Why? Simply because she engaged in lust with the man, and he was taken in by her demonic power. Here, when the love becomes extreme, the person goes insane with greed and lust. Lust arises from greed.

This is called ‘when an agreeable state of samadhi enters one’s mind, lacking the wisdom to control oneself and mistakenly engaging in lustful behavior.’ A state of samadhi, with light ease and compliance, comes into his mind, but he lacks the wisdom to control his emotions and desire, and ends up indulging in all manner of lust. **If he understands, then there is no error**. This is only a temporary and occasional state. He should understand that **this experience** is a demonic state **and does not indicate sagehood**. If you understand, then it’s all right. It is just to be feared that you do not recognize the state when you are in it, and you fall into an inescapable maze of confusion.

K3 Showing how confusion will certainly bring a fall.

Sutra:

“But if he considers himself a sage, then a demon of desire will enter his mind. He will become an outspoken advocate of lust, calling it the Way to Bodhi. He will teach his lay followers to indiscriminately engage in acts of lust, calling those who commit acts of lust his Dharma heirs. The power of spirits and ghosts in the Ending Age will enable him to attract a following of ordinary, naive people numbering one hundred, two hundred, five or six hundred, or as many as one thousand or ten thousand. When the demon becomes bored, it will leave the person’s body. Once the person’s charisma is gone, he will run afoul of the law. He will mislead living beings, so that they fall into the Relentless Hells. Lacking proper samadhi, he will certainly fall.

Commentary:

But if he considers himself a sage, if he views this as the realization of sagehood, then because his views are mistaken, **a demon of** lust and **desire will enter his mind** and possess him. **He will become an outspoken advocate of lust, calling it the Way to Bodhi.** He will talk of nothing but lust. It is like a certain religion in America that promotes polygamy. They say, “The more wives you have, the better.” They are just like this demon, who promotes lust and appeals to people’s desires by saying, “It’s all right to have more wives; it doesn’t matter. That’s the way of Bodhi, so the more wives you have the better!”

He will teach his lay followers to indiscriminately engage in acts of lust. He says, “Don’t discriminate between one another. Let’s all get together and have an orgy!” Not caring whether it is their own wife or someone else’s, they just do as they please. In America, there’s a wife-swapping fad where everybody exchanges wives. This is similar to the kind of activity that this type of demon engages in, **calling those who commit acts of lust his Dharma heirs**. These people who engage in lustful conduct with him will be his “Dharma heirs” who carry on his Dharma; they will receive his Dharma transmission. **The power of** demonic ghosts, deviant **spirits and** deviant **ghosts in the** time of the Dharma-**ending Age, will enable him to attract** and confuse a following of **ordinary, naive,** ignorant **people, numbering one hundred, two hundred, five or six hundred, or as many as one thousand or ten thousand.** Eventually, **when the demon** king **becomes bored,** what happens? **It will leave the person’s body.** What do you suppose happens when it leaves his body? He will no longer have spiritual powers.

Once the person’s charisma is gone, he will run afoul of the law. His charisma came from his spiritual powers. The demon king had spiritual powers, but now the demon king has left, so he no longer has spiritual powers. What do you suppose happens? He will violate the laws of the country. Before, when he had spiritual

powers, the demon could help him escape the authorities. But when the demon leaves, and this ordinary person carries on as before, he will immediately break the law. People will find out that he is a crooked teacher who has been duping his followers and deluding them with strange incantations. Since he has broken the law, he will be arrested and executed. **He will mislead living beings, so that they** will not find the proper path and will **fall into the Relentless Hells. Lacking proper samadhi, he will certainly fall** in the Avichi Hell as well.

I3 Conclusion on the harm, and command to offer protection.
J1 Showing how this happens due to interaction.

Sutra:

"Ananda, all ten of these states may occur in dhyana as one's mental effort interacts with the feeling skandha.

J2 Confusion will bring harm.

Sutra:

"Dull and confused living beings do not evaluate themselves. Encountering such situations, in their confusion they fail to recognize them and say that they have become sages, thereby uttering a great lie. They will fall into the Relentless Hells.

Commentary:

Ananda, all ten of these states may occur in dhyana as one's mental effort interacts with the feeling skandha. Ananda! States like these which manifest in dhyana, "the stilling of thought," are all within the feeling skandha, interacting with one's mental effort. These events are a result of the various interactions that happen as one works hard at his cultivation.

Dull and confused living beings do not evaluate themselves. They do not reflect within and take stock of themselves. **Encountering such situations, in their confusion they fail to recognize them.** They do not recognize who they are, **and** they **say that they have** already **become sages.** They say that they have attained what

they have not attained and have been certified to what they have not been certified to. They claim they have already attained the Way and become certified as sages when they have not, **thereby uttering a great lie. They will** certainly **fall into the Relentless Hells.**

J3 Command to offer protection.

Sutra:

"In the Dharma-ending Age, after my Nirvana, all of you should pass on the Tathagata's teachings, so that all living beings can awaken to their meaning. Do not let the demons of the heavens have their way. Offer protection so that all can realize the unsurpassed Way.

Commentary:

Ananda, **in the Dharma-ending Age, after my Nirvana, all of you should pass on the Tathagata's teachings.** Take these words which the Buddha has spoken, and pass them on, **so that all living beings can awaken to their meaning.** Let them all hear these principles, understand them, and awaken to them. **Do not let the demons of the heavens have their way.** Do not give them an opportunity to disturb those people. **Offer protection so that all** these living beings **can realize the unsurpassed Way.**

CHAPTER 4

The Thinking Skandha

H3 The characteristics of the demons of the thinking skandha.
I1 Overview of the beginning and end.
J1 In the beginning, cultivation has not yet broken out of this region.
K1 Review of the ending of the previous feeling skandha.

Sutra:

"Ananda, when the good person who is cultivating samadhi has put an end to the feeling skandha, although he has not achieved freedom from outflows, his mind can leave his body the way a bird escapes from a cage. From within his ordinary body, he already has the potential for ascending through the Bodhisattvas' sixty levels of sagehood. He attains the 'body produced by intent' and can roam freely without obstruction.

Commentary:

Ananda, when the good person who is cultivating the power of **samadhi has put an end to the feeling skandha**, when the feeling skandha is already gone, **although he has not achieved** the spiritual power of **freedom from outflows,** he already has other spiritual powers and **his** true **mind can leave his body the way a bird escapes from a cage.** Before one puts an end to the feeling skandha, one is trapped in one's body, just like a bird trapped in its cage. Just as the bird can now escape from the cage, **from within**

his ordinary body, he already, by means of spiritual powers, **has the potential for ascending through the Bodhisattvas' sixty levels of sagehood.** Right in this ordinary body, he can become a Bodhisattva and attain the sixty levels of Bodhisattvahood. **He attains the 'body produced by intent' and can roam freely without obstruction.** He has to formulate the intent before he can have the spiritual power of the "body produced by intent." With such a body, he can go wherever he wants. What are the sixty levels of Bodhisattvahood? They are the fifty-five stages of a Bodhisattva discussed before; the three gradual stages and the stage of dry wisdom, making four kinds; and wonderful enlightenment, which makes sixty levels altogether.

K2 Introduction to the region of the thinking skandha.

Sutra:

"This is like someone talking in his sleep. Although he does not know he is doing it, his words are clear, and his voice and inflection are all in order, so those who are awake can understand what he is saying. This is the region of the thinking skandha.

Commentary:

This is like someone talking in his sleep. This is an analogy comparing the region of the thinking skandha to someone talking in his dream. While asleep, he starts saying what he wants to say. **Although he does not know he is doing it, his words are clear, and his voice and inflection are all in order.** Although he doesn't know he is talking in his dream, what he says is intelligible. Everything he says follows in logical order and makes sense, but he himself is not aware of it. **So those who are awake can understand what he is saying.**

For instance, he says, "I wanted to eat *tofu* (soybean cake) today, so I went to the store and bought ten pieces of tofu. When I got back, I cooked them and ate them."

He is not aware of what he is saying, but other people who are awake know, "Oh! He ate tofu today." Why did he say what he said? Because he has not forgotten what he ate. He keeps thinking about it and he will talk about it even in his dream. **This is the region of the thinking skandha.** That is what the region of the thinking skandha is like. But don't take this too literally and think, "The thinking skandha is just talking in a dream." That would be wrong. It is just an analogy.

J2 Ultimately it breaks up and reveals its false source.

Sutra:

"If he puts an end to his stirring thoughts and rids himself of superfluous thinking, it is as if he has purged defilement from the enlightened, understanding mind. Then he is perfectly clear about the births and deaths of all categories of beings from beginning to end. This is the end of the thinking skandha. He can then transcend the turbidity of afflictions. Contemplating the cause of the thinking skandha, one sees that interconnected false thoughts are its source.

Commentary:

If he puts an end to his stirring thoughts, the extremely subtle thoughts in the sixth consciousness, **and rids himself of superfluous thinking…** Since those very fine thoughts in the sixth consciousness have stopped, superfluous thinking is also eliminated. **It is as if he has purged defilement from the enlightened, understanding mind.** This enlightened, clear mind is the eighth consciousness. Now, it appears that the eighth consciousness has been purged of defilement. **Then he is perfectly clear about the births and deaths of all categories of beings from beginning to end.** There are twelve categories of beings, from those born from wombs and those born from eggs up to and including those not entirely lacking thought. He knows the preceding causes and subsequent effects of every kind of being.

This is the end of the thinking skandha. At that time the person obtains the spiritual power of knowing past lives. **He can then transcend the turbidity of afflictions. Contemplating the cause of the thinking skandha,** contemplating the reasons behind his actions and deeds, **one sees that interconnected false thoughts are its source.** At that point, the false thoughts become interpenetrating, and such thoughts become its source.

I2 The ten states within this.
J1 Greed for clever skill.
K1 Samadhi leads to craving and seeking.

Sutra:

"Ananda, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samadhi, his mind craves its perfect brightness, so he sharpens his concentrated thought as he greedily seeks for cleverness and skill.

Commentary:

Ananda, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state. No deviant thoughts can disturb him.

[January 1983]

"In the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state." At this point, the feeling skandha is over, and he is in the thinking skandha, which is subtle and wondrous. What is wonderful is that when you have no faults, you will not be troubled by deviant mental states, that is, by feelings of worry and fear. what is meant by worry and fear? It's like the man of *Qi*, who worried that the sky would fall down. He had a deviant mental state. Now the cultivator is no longer troubled by deviant mental states. He doesn't have them in himself. However, he is not strong enough to resist troubles that come from outside, because love,

greed, and seeking are still present in his mind. Since selfish and self-benefiting thoughts are still concealed inside, he is vulnerable to states from the external environment. “Deviant mental states” refer not only to thoughts, but also to feelings of worry and fear. when you are afraid of something, then you have a deviant mental state. When others oppress you and you’re afraid to speak out about it, that’s also a deviant mental state.

[January 1983, another day]

While we are investigating the Fifty Skandha-demon States, five hundred kinds of skandha demons may come, so you should open your doors to them and invite them to come make trouble. Although they are demons, they help your cultivation from the reverse; they test you to see how firmly resolved you are. If you have true determination, then a thousand demons will not make you waver, ten thousand demons will not make you retreat and you will not be afraid of anything, because you are not seeking anything. As it is said,

> *When you reach the place of seeking nothing,*
> *You will have no more worries.*

Since you seek nothing, you will not fear anything. What is there to be afraid of? Some people are afraid of ghosts because of their grotesque appearance. They know that some people turn into ghosts after they die. No one is afraid of spirits, despite the fierce appearance of those spirits clad in golden armor. Confucius said, “One should respect ghosts and spirits, but keep them at a distance.” You should be very respectful toward ghosts and spirits, but don’t draw near to them. You should fear neither ghosts nor spirits.

You need not fear demons; they are just testing you out, trying out your skill in cultivation. If you’re afraid, then they will come even if you don’t want them to. If you are not afraid, then they will not be able to come even if they want to. The secret is to not be afraid. If you’re not afraid, then you are “proper” and you can

subdue anything, because the deviant cannot overcome the proper. Demons fear those who are proper, great and bright. If you can be that way, then the demons will behave themselves and will even bow to you.

And he experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samadhi, his mind craves its perfect brightness, so he sharpens his concentrated thought as he greedily seeks for cleverness and skill. "To sharpen" means to refine his intense reflection, which is that perfect brightness. He greedily seeks to have skill-in-means to teach and transform living beings. That is what he is greedy for.

[May 21, 1989]

Venerable Master: Here, being "clever and skillful" doesn't refer to ordinary expedient means. Expedient means are very casual. These "clever and skillful" methods which he uses are very ingenious and subtle, and you can't detect any flaws in them, because he applies them very well. You cannot tell that they are expedients.

Disciple: Is he seeking cleverness and skill so he can teach and transform people?

Venerable Master: Not only in teaching, but in all aspects, he has this kind of clever and skillful wisdom. Regular expedient methods can be recognized as such by people. But the kind of cleverness and skill spoken of here cannot immediately be detected by others, because the person speaks very reasonably and ingeniously. You can't find any faults with what he says.

K2 A demon dispatches a deviant force to possess a person.

Sutra:

"At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.

Commentary:

At that time a demon from the Sixth Desire **heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for.** Seeing that the cultivator's samadhi power is about to be perfected, it waits for a chance to get at him. It watches for some flaw in his character which will provide an opening. The existence of an opening indicates that his samadhi power is not yet solid. Occasionally he will have an extraneous false thought. Once he has that false thought his samadhi power is no longer firm, and the demon will take advantage of him. Thus it says the demon "seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for."

[January 1983]

The demon "seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for." That is, he seizes the opportunity provided by the cultivator's greed and opens up the door. It's not easy to understand what the Sutra means; you may be off by just that little bit in your interpretation.

Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma. The demon from the heavens commands one of its followers, "Go to that place and destroy that person's samadhi power." Before the form skandha and the feeling skandha were ended, the demon could possess the cultivator himself and confuse him. But after the form skandha and feeling skandha are gone and the cultivator reaches the thinking skandha, the demon cannot possess him. It has to take possession of another person and then speak the Dharma for the cultivator through that person. That person lectures on the Sutras, but the Dharma he speaks is deviant and you should recognize it for what it is.

[May 21, 1989]

"Its spirit possesses another person, and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma." There are two ways to explain this. You could say the demon possesses another person, who then comes to speak Dharma for the first person. You could also say that the demon possesses the cultivator of samadhi

himself. Either of these interpretations can apply; there is more than one meaning.

When a cultivator is at the level of the thinking skandha, the demon's spirit cannot possess him and confuse his mind directly. For example, right now there is a cultivator who involuntarily does *tai ji quan* and shouts, but he realizes what is going on and knows that it is wrong. The demon is unable to confuse his mind. On the other hand, if a person has not cultivated at all, then once the demon confuses him, he will not understand anything at all; he will not realize that a demon has come or the things it has done. Most people who don't cultivate are this way. The demon possesses the person and speaks through him. Then after the demon has left, you ask the person what happened and he has no idea. That's because his mind was thoroughly confused. Someone who is not confused by the demon will be able to keep a clear mind during the experience. There are various interpretations, not just one. If you interpret the text as saying only that the demon possesses another person, your interpretation is incomplete. There are many possibilities, and the situation could develop in one of several directions, so it is not fixed.

While the text may be explained in any way that makes sense, the translation of the Sutra should not limited to a particular explanation. The Sutra is like an ocean, while explanations of it are like rivers. Rivers can flow into the ocean in many different ways, and so you cannot use a particular river to represent the entire ocean.

[December 2, 1993]

Do not become too attached to what the Sutra says. The Sutra gives a general idea of what might happen, but each particular situation may be different. There are not only fifty, but perhaps five hundred, five thousand, or even fifty thousand kinds of states. There are so many states that we could never finish speaking of them. These [fifty states] are just a general summary, and you shouldn't think of them as profound and esoteric. Regard them as if

they were spoken by an ordinary person, and don't always be splitting hairs.

My explanations of Sutras are called "Simple Explanations"; I don't give profound explanations. When I explain a Sutra, my only aim is for everyone to understand what I mean and for me to understand what everyone else means. Don't think too deeply. Anyone who thinks too deeply will never be able to finish explaining it. Don't beat your head against the wall trying to figure out exactly what it means. After all, this Sutra is a translation; it is not so rigidly fixed that you cannot add or omit a word. It does not correspond exactly to the original Sanskrit. Just try to convey the general meaning; don't spend too much time pursuing the fine details of literary interpretation.

Disciple: At the level of the thinking skandha, the demons from the heavens can no longer disturb the cultivator's mind directly. A demon has to possess another person in order to disturb the cultivator's samadhi.

Venerable Master: For example, a cultivator may frequently encounter people who are possessed by ghosts, who come to speak the Dharma for him, or who come to challenge him to see who is on top.

At the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, there's a student from the University of California at Berkeley who has many snakes following him. You may not have seen them, but *Guo Zhen* saw those snakes get into a Dharma-contest with me at Gold Mountain Monastery. They are really ferocious! His presence there gave the snakes a chance to fight with me. They have been fighting me for over ten years now. When he went to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, he would gradually get better, but as soon as he went back to school in Berkeley, he would get sick again. He realizes that there are many snakes on him. He killed these snakes in the past, and now they've come to get revenge. I've been using wholesome dharmas to try to make peace with them. That's how I treat them, regardless of whether or not they pay any heed. It's a slow process.

Over the last ten years or so, many of the snakes have left him, but there are still a few left. There used to be a whole bunch of them. This case is similar to the state described in the Sutra.

Disciple: When a person comes to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, are those beings afraid to come and seek him out?

Venerable Master: No, they still come. When it [the snake] came to challenge my Dharma, it was terribly fierce. At first he [the student possessed by the snake] knelt down, but then he stood up and waved his hands and glared at me. His heavy breathing sounded worse than a screeching and hissing cat.

Disciple: Master, what did you do? Did you give it a good scolding?

Venerable Master: No, I just pretended nothing was happening. People saw me acting as if nothing were going on, but actually, I had converted it. It was hostile to me, but I wasn't hostile to it. I used to use the Dharma of Subduing, but not anymore. Now I use the Dharma of Averting Disasters.

Disciple: When the form skandha has come to an end, deviant demons can no longer possess a cultivator. They have to possess another person. But is there another interpretation in which the demon can directly possess the cultivator?

Venerable Master: There are endless possibilities. The demon can even possess a cat. It all depends on whether or not you recognize it. It can also possess other animals. There's no fixed rule.

Disciple: Can it possess the cultivator himself?

Venerable Master: No, it can't get to him.

Disciple: But when the Venerable Master explained the Fifty Skandha-demons in the past, you said it could possess the cultivator himself.

Venerable Master: As I said, none of this is fixed. The text gives one example, but that's not the only way it can be. There are many variations. Each case encompasses many possibilities.

Disciple: But didn't the Venerable Master just say that the demons can't get to the cultivator himself?

Venerable Master: If he truly cultivates, then the demons can't get to him, because there are Dharma-protecting spirits protecting him.

Disciple: If the cultivator starts entertaining false thoughts, then…

Venerable Master: Then they'll get to him.

Disciple: It's just like living at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. If we follow the rules set down by the Master, then those beings cannot bother us. If we don't follow the rules, then they can come.

Venerable Master: Many people who come here have a lot of deviant demons of external ways, goblins, ghosts, and strange spirits attached to them. Yet the Bodhisattvas who guard the Dharma don't try to keep them out. We practice kindness and compassion here. Thus we haven't fortified our place or set up any defense against them.

Disciple: If someone truly cultivates, then the demons can't get to him. But if he's not cultivating and he starts indulging in false thoughts, then they can come.

Venerable Master: Right, it's a case of the deviant attracting the deviant.

Disciple: If the demons can't get to him now, it doesn't necessarily mean that they can't get to him ever. For instance, when National Master Wuda entertained a thought of arrogance…

Venerable Master: Right! That's a very clear illustration!

Disciple: The ghost hadn't been able to get to him for ten lives, but with that one improper thought, it was able to get in.

Venerable Master: It came to demand his life!

Disciple: So would you say that the demons can get to the cultivator or not? It's not fixed. If he truly cultivates, then they can't get to him, but if he doesn't, then they can.

Venerable Master: Right, it's not fixed. Whatever can be put into words loses its real meaning. Once you understand this principle, you shouldn't pursue the details too intently. As I just said, there are infinite variations and possibilities. These fifty states can be transformed into five hundred, five thousand, or fifty thousand states. Don't spend too much time on these examples. You should understand that there are other cases that are variations of these. In general, whatever can be said has no real meaning. You could say all the Sutras are false, but you must find the true principles within this falseness. Any Sutra that makes sense can be believed. If it doesn't make sense, if it's incorrect, then don't believe it.

K3 The person who is possessed causes trouble.

Sutra:

"This person, unaware that he is possessed by a demon, claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks cleverness and skill, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma. In an instant, he may appear to be a Bhikshu, enabling that person to see him as such, or he may appear as Shakra, as a woman, or as a Bhikshuni; or his body may emit light as he sleeps in a dark room.

Commentary:

You can see how formidable these demonic states are. **This person, unaware that he is possessed by a demon,** has no idea a demon is helping him. He **claims** that **he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana.** He claims to have obtained the truth of Nirvana, the wonderful fruition of Nirvana.

[January 1983]

Yesterday someone mentioned a certain person who recited the Buddha's name and then suddenly started jumping around, as if dancing. He was possessed by a demonic spirit. He didn't know what was happening, and he thought, "Wow! I've entered samadhi." He was like a rambunctious kid; he hopped about like a bunny.

When he comes to see that good person, the cultivator **who seeks cleverness and skill, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma** for that good person who seeks to be clever and skillful.

In an instant, very briefly, **he may appear to be a Bhikshu, enabling that person** who seeks clever skill **to see him as such. Or he may appear as Shakra**-Lord God, **as a woman, or as a Bhikshuni.** When the person seeking cleverness and skill sees him going through such transformations, he thinks, "He must be Gwan Yin Bodhisattva!" He has no idea that it is a demon. That's why you shouldn't get carried away by any state you see, no matter what it is.

Or his body may emit light as he sleeps in a dark room. When people who do not understand the Buddhadharma see that, they marvel "Wow! His body emits light! If he isn't a Buddha, he must be at least a Bodhisattva or an Arhat!" They do not realize that the person is possessed by a demon king that is manifesting spiritual powers in order to delude the cultivator.

Therefore, as ordinary people who do not truly understand the Buddhadharma, we should not be turned by the things we see, no matter what they are. Don't become moved and run off after those states. How should you treat them? Look upon them as if they didn't exist. Seeing those things should be the same as not seeing them. Be neither elated nor disgusted. If you become elated when you see a demon, then you have been turned by the demon's state. If you get disgusted, then you have also been turned by the demon's state. How should you act? Just maintain the Middle Way, neither liking nor disliking it. See as if you haven't seen, and hear as if you

haven't heard. You shouldn't say, "That was a fine state! I'd like to see that again!" If you have that thought, you have made a mistake.

[January 1983]

Demons are very smart. They see what you're greedy for and use that to tempt you. Therefore, cultivators don't need to recite any particular mantra or practice any particular dharma. Just be honest and true; don't contend, don't be greedy, don't seek, don't be selfish, and don't pursue personal gain. If you put your shoulder to the grindstone and cultivate diligently, no demon can bother you. But as soon as you become greedy or you start scheming for advantages and shortcuts, it's easy for demons to possess you. Demons are very wise; they can see what level of cultivation you've reached and know what methods should be used to lure you. As for choosing a person to possess, that's not a problem, because the person is only a false front for them. They use the person, and they use various methods to entice and delude you. If a cultivator is unselfish and doesn't think about benefiting himself, he will not be afraid of any demon

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K4 The cultivator becomes deluded and confused.

Sutra:

"The good person is beguiled and fooled into thinking that the other is a Bodhisattva. He believes the other's teachings and his mind is swayed. He breaks the Buddha's moral precepts and covertly indulges his greedy desires.

Commentary:

The good person who cultivates samadhi **is beguiled and fooled** at this point **into thinking that the other is a Bodhisattva.** When he sees how the person can appear as a Bhikshu, as Shakra, as a lay woman, and as a Bhikshuni, suddenly changing from one appearance to another, he thinks the person must be a Bodhisattva."

He then deeply **believes the other's teachings and his mind is swayed. He breaks the Buddha's moral precepts.** What should you examine in a cultivator? See whether or not he keeps the

Buddha's precepts. If he doesn't, then he is certainly a demon. If he strictly adheres to the precepts without violating them, then he is a genuine Buddhist. However, someone may claim to be a Buddhist call himself a Venerable Elder, and assume other tides as well, **and** yet **he covertly indulges his greedy desires.** He engages in a clandestine affair and tries to keep people from knowing about it.

K5 The types of things he says.

Sutra:

"The other person is fond of speaking about calamities, auspicious events, and unusual changes. He may say that a Tathagata has appeared in the world at a certain place. He may speak of catastrophic fires or wars, thus frightening people into squandering their family wealth without reason.

Commentary:

The other person is fond of speaking about calamities, auspicious events, and unusual changes. What does the person who is possessed by the demon like to speak about? He likes to talk about calamities, which are unlucky events. He may say a calamity is going to occur in a certain place, or that something auspicious is going to happen somewhere, or that an unusual event is going to take place. **He may say that a Tathagata has appeared in the world at a certain place.** He may say, "You know what? Such-and-such a Buddha has now appeared in the world at such-and-such a place."

He may speak of catastrophic fires or wars. He may say, "The three disasters-flood, fire, and wind-and the eight difficulties are upon us." Or, "The kalpa is coming to an end!" Or he might warn people, "Be careful, war is about to break out there." Or, "The Soviet Union is about to go to war with a certain country!" He speaks in this way, **thus frightening people into squandering their family wealth without reason.** He always says things that capture people's attention and cause them to be alarmed. When people hear what he says, they panic, "Oh no! There's going to be

war. Will my life be in danger?" He might say, "The war is starting. If you give me some money immediately, I'll guarantee your safety. If you don't pay me, you will lose your life!" He is always saying such things to cheat people.

If you want to determine whether a person is genuine or phony, whether he is a Bodhisattva or a demon, you can look for the following things: First, see whether he has any desire for sex; and second, see whether he is greedy for money. If he cheats people to satisfy his lust and greed for wealth, then he is not genuine. How might he be greedy for wealth? For example, he may say, "A great calamity is nearly upon us! The world is coming to an end. An atomic bomb is going to explode at such-and-such a place. A hydrogen bomb will be set off at another place." He says such things to frighten people into giving him their money. If you wake up to his tricks, then even if he emits light, makes the earth quake, or does something else spectacular, you shouldn't believe in him, because he is greedy. A person without greed is true; a greedy person is a phony. My method is a practical and effective truth-detector.

[January 1983]

If we had no greed or desires, then we would have no trouble. If you have greed and desire, then all sorts of things will happen. All the myriad things, beings, and species in the world are born from greed and desire. Thus it is said, "When not a single thought is produced, the entire substance manifests." If you don't have thoughts of greed and desire, then the Buddha-nature will appear. "When the six sense faculties suddenly move, one is covered by clouds." Once the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind become attached to a state, it's like the sky clouding over so that the sun cannot shine. Fundamentally, what causes the six sense faculties to move? Greed and desire. Because you are unable to give up greed and desire, the six sense faculties turn into the six thieves and the six consciousnesses come into being. If you had no greed and desire, then the thieves of the six sense faculties would no longer be

thieves, and the six consciousnesses would no longer be consciousnesses. Everything would return to the source, and all troubles would disappear. Everyone should pay attention to this. It all depends on whether or not you have greed and desire. If you do, then you have not separated yourself from the demons yet. If you do not, then you have joined with the Buddhas.

K6 Giving the name and pointing out the harm.

Sutra:

"This is a strange ghost that in its old age has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person. But when it tires of doing so, it will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.

Commentary:

This is a strange, weird **ghost that,** after a long time, **in its old age has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person. But when it tires of doing so, it will leave the other person's body.** Eventually, it gets bored of playing this game. It has had enough, and so it stops possessing the person. When that happens, **then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.** The authorities arrest them, accuse them of rabble-rousing, and either execute them or punish them in some other way.

[January 1983]

This is the time to study, and we must keep studying the states, one by one, until we finish. Then everyone will have a better understanding. Right now we've just started studying, and some will understand, while others won't. When each of you comes to the front, you are not here to interrogate anyone, but just to investigate what you have seen and understood with everyone else. The person who just came up here had a correct understanding. When the form skandha is obliterated, the view of self is emptied, so that one no longer has a sense of self, and all physical objects, all things with form and appearance, are also emptied. If you don't understand

this, you can read over the Sutra text a few more times, and then you'll naturally understand.

All religions operate in the realm of the five skandhas. Later on the text talks about how both the teacher and the disciples get in trouble with the law. The words "teacher and disciples" indicate that this is talking about religion. Being satisfied with their small achievements, they set up their own religion and claim that it is the real one. Without my having to mention any religions by name, everyone should know what I'm talking about. If you want to know which skandhas those religions fall under, what level they have reached, then you have to gain a thorough under-standing of the fifty skandha-demon states.

Instead of just asking questions, you should look into them yourselves. We are all studying together, and it shouldn't be that one person answers everyone else's questions, because our wisdom is equal. In our investigation, if everyone agrees to a principle, then we will consider it correct. We are gathering everyone's opinions, and when we publish the Fifty Skandha-demon States in the future, each person's opinion should be included. This is a joint investigation, not one person answering others' questions. Anyone can speak out and express an opinion.

Why do we have only two people reading aloud? Because these two people have passable Chinese and English. They are giving a general explanation of the meaning, and if what they say is incomplete, people can speak up. People should not be simply asking questions. This is not like when we lectured on the *Brahma Net Sutra*. This meeting is investigatory in nature, and everyone is equal. There's no need to request the Dharma or do anything. Everyone should just investigate and study together. No one is debating with anyone else, and anyone can express an opinion. Do you all think this is a good method?

[January 1983, another day]

Disciple: The Sutra text says that the teacher and disciples will both fall into the hells?

Venerable Master: Right, that's referring to the cultivator!

Disciple: Is the cultivator one of the disciples?

Venerable Master: Not necessarily. The teacher is also that way; he's also a cultivator. An example of this was the People's Church. You can tell by whether or not a person has lust. If he has lust, then he is a demon. If he doesn't, then he's proper and he's a Buddha. That's where the difference lies. If he hasn't cut off lust then he can't subdue his mind. He may be able to sit there and enter samadhi, but while in samadhi, he is still greedy and seeking. "He correctly indulges his greedy desires." That's how you can recognize him.

K7 Instructions to be aware and not become confused.

Sutra:

"You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.

Commentary:

You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. You should awaken to this early on and not enter the demon king's cycle of birth and death. **If you are confused and do not understand,** in the future **you will fall into the Relentless Hells.**

J2 Greedy for adventure.
K1 Samadhi leads to craving and seeking.

Sutra:

"Further, Ananda, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samadhi, his mind craves to roam about, so he lets his subtle thoughts fly out as he greedily seeks for adventure.

Commentary:

Further, Ananda, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone, this good person who cultivates samadhi **is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect bright concentration. Within samadhi, his mind** has another false thought and **craves to roam about,** that is, "to go out the top of his head and roam around in his spiritual body." That means his spirit goes out and runs around to various places. **So he lets his subtle thoughts fly out as he greedily seeks for adventure.** His spirit flies out and wants to go everywhere, to see the sights and have some fun.

K2 A demon dispatches a deviant force to possess a person.

Sutra:

"At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.

Commentary:

At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. The demon king in the heavens again becomes jealous and waits for an opening to get in. **Its spirit possesses another person.** It again sends a member of its retinue to possess another person **and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.** It comes to disturb the cultivator. Why does the cultivator get possessed by a demon? Simply because he is greedy for adventure; he longs to travel, to roam far and wide, As soon as he entertains the thought of roaming, that gives the demon king the chance to disturb him. The demon would not come if the cultivator did not have that thought.

K3 The person who is possessed causes trouble.

Sutra:

"This person, unaware that he is possessed by a demon, claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks to roam, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma. His own body does not change its appearance, but those listening to the Dharma suddenly see themselves sitting on jeweled lotuses and their entire bodies transformed into clusters of purple-golden light. Each person in the audience experiences that state and feels he has obtained something unprecedented.

Commentary:

This person, unaware that he is possessed by a demon, claims he has reached the wondrous fruition of **unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks to roam,** that is, the cultivator who had a false thought about his spiritual body going out the top of his head and roaming everywhere, **he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma. His own body does not change its appearance.** In the previous passage, the person's own body took on the appearance of a Bhikshu, of Shakra, of a lay woman, of a Bhikshuni, and various other forms. But in this case his body does not change. There are different kinds of demons, and you should not consider experiencing an unusual state to be something good. If one occurs and you don't recognize it, a demon can possess you. Here, the body of the person who is speaking the Dharma doesn't change, **but those listening to the Dharma suddenly see themselves sitting on jeweled lotuses and their entire bodies transformed into clusters of purple-golden light**. Suddenly, everyone feels as if he is sitting on a jeweled lotus and his whole body has turned into a cluster of purple-golden light. **Each person in the audience experiences that state and feels he has obtained something unprecedented.** They think this is rare and unusual something they have never seen before. They believe it to be a good state, but actually it is a demonic state.

K4 The cultivator becomes deluded and confused.

Sutra:

"The good person is beguiled and fooled into thinking the other is a Bodhisattva. Lust and laxity corrupt his mind. He breaks the Buddha's moral precepts and covertly indulges his greedy desires.

Commentary:

The good person is beguiled and fooled into thinking the other is a Bodhisattva. Not only this person, but all those listening to the Dharma are very stupid. Their minds are confused, and they think, "He's really a Bodhisattva! He can make me sit on a jeweled lotus and turn the color of purple-golden light." You should ask yourself if you are really seated on a lotus blossom and radiant with purple-golden light. Actually it is all false. How can you, an ordinary person, have such a state? Isn't this a demon king that has come to fool you? Why would a Bodhisattva make such a state appear? What is the Bodhisattva trying to get from you?

Lust and laxity corrupt his mind. The minds of those listening to Dharma are moved as well, and they start having thoughts of lust. **He breaks the Buddha's moral precepts.** They don't keep the Buddha's precepts anymore. You should all remember: After you take the precepts, never be deceived by such states of confused belief. Even if a Dharma-speaker displays mighty spiritual powers, you should look him over carefully and see if he is greedy. If he is out for money or if he has lust, then he's not genuine. He's a phony. If a person does not have any lust, greed, or ulterior motives, then he is genuine. If he violates the Buddha's moral precepts, then he's a fraud. **And** he **covertly indulges his greedy desires.** He engages in licentious conduct on the sly.

K5 The types of things he says.

Sutra:

"The other person is fond of saying that Buddhas are appearing in the world. He claims that in a certain place a certain person is actually a transformation body of a certain Buddha. Or he says that a certain person is such and such a Bodhisattva who has come to teach humankind. People who witness this are filled with admiration. Their wrong views multiply, and their Wisdom of Modes is destroyed.

Commentary:

The other person is fond of saying that Buddhas are appearing in the world. The person possessed by the demon likes to roam about, and then based on his adventures, he talks about strange and mysterious things. The things he says are so mysterious that no one can conceive of them. He says, "All the Buddhas have now come into the world to save people." **He claims that in a certain place a certain person is actually a transformation body of a certain Buddha.** "He's really Buddha So-and-so, whose transformation body has come here to save living beings." **Or he says that a certain person is such and such a Bodhisattva who has come to teach humankind.**

For example, one of my disciples says that the disciples of a certain teacher say that their teacher is a Bodhisattva. That's ridiculous. What kind of Bodhisattva? A ghost Bodhisattva. They're just cheating people. I'll tell you something: A real Buddha or Bodhisattva would never admit that he was a Buddha or a Bodhisattva. Nor would he let his disciples advertise for him, saying, "Our teacher is a Bodhisattva." I never told you to talk like that. Why do some of you say that your teacher is a Buddha? You must never speak that way about me. Haven't I told you I'm a ghost? Just tell them your teacher is a ghost. I don't want to be called a Bodhisattva or a Buddha. How pathetic those people are! Here the person says, "This is a Bodhisattva who has come to teach the world! He has come to save us in this Dharma-ending Age."

People who witness this are filled with admiration. Since they have childish views and don't really understand the Buddhadharma, they think, "Wow! He's a Bodhisattva! Fantastic! Let's hurry and go hear him speak the Dharma and ask him to be our teacher!" For example, yesterday someone came to steal the Dharma. I asked him who his teacher was, and he said it was So-and-so. That's the kind of situation this is referring to. They are filled with awe and admiration. "We'll take this Bodhisattva as our teacher, and study Bodhisattva Dharmas with him. Since he's a Bodhisattva, of course all the people he teaches can become Bodhisattvas, too." As a result, **their wrong views multiply,** gradually growing thicker and thicker, **and their Wisdom of Modes is destroyed.** Their Wisdom of All Modes and all their various kinds of wisdom are eradicated. The seeds of their wisdom are destroyed. It's that dangerous!

[January 1983]

There's not a very great difference between what is true principle and what is not true principle. It's a very subtle difference, and so it's not easy for us to have Dharma-selecting vision and to distinguish between Proper Dharma and deviant dharmas, or good and evil. If a person is proper, then everything he does will be open and upright. If he is deviant, then he will always be taking risks hoping to gain advantages; he will do disgraceful things. Good people try to help others, while evil people harm others. Once we recognize these points, we will have a clear understanding.

K6 Giving the name and pointing out the harm.

Sutra:

"This is a drought ghost that in its old age has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person. But when it tires of doing so, it will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.

Commentary:

This is a drought ghost that in its old age has become a demon. Wherever a drought ghost goes, there will be no rainfall. The drought will last at least six months, and it may go on for one, two, three, or five years. As long as the ghost is in the area, there will be no rain. While young, it is a ghost. But as it ages, it becomes more crafty and villainous and turns into a demon. A derogatory proverb about old people says: "To be old and not to have died is to be a rascal." That is even more the case with ghosts. If a ghost grows old and doesn't die, it becomes a demon. **It disturbs and confuses the good person. But when it tires of doing so,** after it has played its tricks for a long time, the demon becomes bored with the whole affair. Having lost interest, **it will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.** They are arrested and put in prison. They may be executed or face life imprisonment. It is just as if they were in the hells.

K7 Instructions to be aware and not become confused.

Sutra:

"You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.

Commentary:

You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the demon king's **cycle of transmigration.** Don't join the demon's retinue. **If you are confused and do not understand,** if you don't recognize the workings of the demon king, then **you will** follow the demon king and **fall into the Relentless Hells.**

J3 Greed for union.
K1 Samadhi leads to craving and seeking.

Sutra:

“Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samadhi, his mind craves spiritual oneness, so he clarifies his concentrated thought as he greedily seeks for union.

Commentary:

Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues $ after the feeling skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samadhi, his mind craves spiritual oneness. He wants to join in close connection with all sages. **So he clarifies his concentrated thought as he greedily seeks for union.** He forcefully uses subtle thoughts that have been settled and made clear. Because of his one secret thought of craving for union, he gives the demon king a chance to come and disturb him.

K2 A demon dispatches a deviant force to possess a person.

Sutra:

“At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.

Commentary:

The demon sees its chance, so it dispatches a spirit that quickly possesses a person and speaks the Dharma through him.

K3 The person who is possessed causes trouble.

Sutra:

"This person, unaware that he is actually possessed by a demon, claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks union, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma. Neither his own body nor the bodies of those listening to the Dharma go through any external transformations. But he makes the minds of the listeners become 'enlightened' before they listen to the Dharma, so they experience changes in every thought. They may have the knowledge of past lives or the knowledge of others' thoughts. They may see the hells or know all the good and evil events in the human realm. They may speak verses or spontaneously recite Sutras. Each person is elated and feels he has obtained something unprecedented.

Commentary:

This possessed **person** is **unaware that he is actually possessed by a demon.** He **claims he has reached** the wondrous fruition of **unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person,** the cultivator **who seeks union, he arranges a** Dharma **seat,** ascends it, **and speaks the Dharma. Neither his own body nor the bodies of those listening to the Dharma go through any external transformations.** His own appearance does not change, nor do the appearances of his listeners change. Nothing happens on the outside. It is not as in a previous passage, where the listeners saw themselves sitting on precious lotus flowers or saw their own bodies radiating purple-golden light. Nor is it as when they saw the person speaking Dharma change into a Bhikshu, a Bhikshuni, Shakra, a woman, and so forth. There are no such transformations.

But instead **he makes the minds of the listeners become 'enlightened' before they listen to the Dharma.** After their "enlightenment," they feel as if they are drunk or having a dream in which they strike it rich. This "enlightenment" is not true enlight-

enment. It is an illusory state, like watching a movie or taking an hallucinogenic drug. They see everything in an altered state **so** that in their minds **they experience changes in every thought.**

They may have the knowledge of past lives, but again the knowledge of past lives they attain is not real. What they see is totally illusory. Or they may have the knowledge of others' thoughts. They may see all of the states in the hells. **Or** they may **know all the good and evil events in the human realm. They may** casually be able to **speak verses** on their own, **or** they may **spontaneously recite Sutras. Each person is elated and feels he has obtained something unprecedented.** They all say, "He truly is a Bodhisattva! He's really a Buddha! He has made me enlightened! He has given me the power of knowing past lives." However, the experience lasts only while they are listening to the Dharma. That is why it is not genuine.

[May 1989]

Layperson: Venerable Master, Dharma Masters, and Good Advisors. I'd like to share something which is closely related to everyone's cultivation.

When the feeling skandha comes to an end, the cultivator tends to be in a state of anxiety in which he craves clever and skillful expedients. He wants to merge with the cosmic principle, unite with potentials, and convert living beings. When he has this kind of anxiety, several things may happen. For example, some people who have never read Sutras before will become possessed by demons, and then they will be able to explain many Sutras. There are many "cultivators" in Taiwan who have read very little of the Sutras and who may have violated the substance of the precepts they received. Yet they want to obtain clever and skillful expedients; when they see other people explaining Sutras and gaining a large following, they hope to quickly attain wisdom themselves so that they can also explain Sutras to many people. Having such a thought they become possessed by demons as they sit in meditation.

Many people who seem to be very good at explaining Sutras are actually possessed by demons. Of course, if a person strictly follows the precepts, diligently recites mantras and Sutras, and cultivates very hard, then he may not be possessed. However, there are some people who are very casual about holding precepts and who do not recite Sutras or bow to the Buddhas; yet when they go onstage and close their eyes, after two or three days not only they themselves, but also those in the audience who gave rise to false thinking will be able to lecture very well on the Sutras without having studied them before.

I don't think this will happen at the Venerable Master's Way-places. If you go to other Way-places where the Dharma-protecting spirits don't do a good job and you give rise to false thinking and greedy attachments, then you may have these states, especially if you like to meditate. People who don't meditate usually don't have these states. There is an elderly woman in Taiwan who was basically illiterate, but after three or five days, she could write beautiful Chinese calligraphy. I've seen many cases like this, where people suddenly "become Buddhas" in a few days' time. That woman had not been able to explain Sutras before, but after three days, she was very good at explaining them. Such strange things really happen.

That is why everyone wants to learn deviant dharmas and no one wants to learn the Proper Dharma. If you explain the Buddhadharma to them, they won't listen. Those of us here are probably more aware of such phenomena. These states probably won't happen to people at this Way-place, but you have to be careful when you go out.

Venerable Master: These are all cases of people being possessed by fox spirits. This is what is meant by "its spirit possesses a person."

K4 The cultivator becomes deluded and confused.

Sutra:

"The good person is beguiled and fooled into thinking the other is a Bodhisattva. His thoughts become entangled in love. He breaks the Buddha's moral precepts and covertly indulges his greedy desires.

Commentary:

The good person is beguiled and fooled into thinking the other is a Bodhisattva. The cultivator is extremely stupid and thinks the possessed person is a Bodhisattva. **His thoughts become entangled in love.** He falls in love with the demon. **He breaks the Buddha's moral precepts,** not abiding by them, **and covertly indulges his greedy desires.** He has licentious relations on the sly.

K5 The types of things he says.

Sutra:

"He is fond of saying that there are greater Buddhas and lesser Buddhas, earlier Buddhas and later Buddhas; that among them are true Buddhas and false Buddhas, male Buddhas and female Buddhas; and that the same is true of Bodhisattvas. When people witness this, their initial resolve is washed away, and they easily get carried away with their wrong understanding.

Commentary:

He is fond of saying that there are greater Buddhas and lesser Buddhas. What does this demon like to say? It says, "You people study the Buddhadharma, but do you know what Buddhas are all about? There are great Buddhas and small Buddhas, old Buddhas and young Buddhas." He further elaborates that there are **earlier Buddhas and later Buddhas; that among them are true Buddhas and false Buddhas.** The demon king claims that he is a true Buddha, while other Buddhas are false Buddhas. He also says that there are **male Buddhas and female Buddhas.** He insists,

"Intercourse between men and women creates Buddhas. It is the origin of Buddhas; it is the Bodhi mind." Of course this confuses people. They think, "Oh, so that's how one becomes a Buddha!" and then they indulge in wild debauchery. They would rather die than not engage in lust.

And he says **that the same is true of Bodhisattvas**, maintaining that there are great and small Bodhisattvas, and male and female ones, too. Actually, anyone who becomes a Buddha or a Bodhisattva is male. There are no female Buddhas or Bodhisattvas. Guanyin Bodhisattva may manifest in the form of a woman in order to teach and rescue women. **When people witness this** and hear him saying such things, they think, "He's right. I always see Guanyin Bodhisattva depicted as a female. That's proof right there." Such people do not understand the Buddhadharma. Guanyin Bodhisattva is neither male nor female. The Bodhisattva responds to each living being and appears in an appropriate form to teach and transform that being. It is very difficult to distinguish manifestations of Bodhisattvas from manifestations of demons, because demons also have spiritual powers and the ability to transform themselves. How can you tell if someone is a demon? Observe to see whether he has lust or greed. **Their initial resolve is washed away.** They change their minds and forsake their original resolve to cultivate, **and they easily get carried away with their wrong understanding.**

K6 Giving the name and pointing out the harm.

Sutra:

"This is a mei-ghost that in its old age has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person. But when it tires of doing so, it will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.

Commentary:

This is a mei-ghost, a ghost that falls into the category of ii, mei, and wang liang ghosts, **that in its old age has become a**

demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person who is cultivating samadhi. **But when it tires of doing so** eventually, **it will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.** They will be arrested and imprisoned.

K7 Instructions to be aware and not become confused.

Sutra:

"You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.

Commentary:

You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. You should wake up at the very start and avoid entering the demon king's cycle of rebirth. **If you** lack wisdom and **are confused, and** you **do not understand** what is going on, **you will fall into the Relentless Hells.**

J4 Greed to analyze things.
K1 Samadhi leads to craving and seeking.

Sutra:

"Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samadhi, his mind craves to know the origins of things, so he exhaustively investigates the nature of physical things and their changes from beginning to end. He intensifies the keenness of his thoughts as he greedily seeks to analyze things.

Commentary:

Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone, this good person who is cultivating samadhi **is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect bright concentration. Within samadhi,**

his mind craves to know the origins of things. He decides that he wants to study the principles of the physical world. **So he exhaustively investigates the nature of physical things and their changes** and transformations **from beginning to end,** to find out what they are all about. **He intensifies the keenness of his thoughts,** honing his mental concentration **as he greedily seeks to analyze,** differentiate, and understand **things** in the physical world.

K2 A demon dispatches a deviant force to possess a person.

Sutra:

"At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.

Commentary:

At that time a demon from the heavens sees him and says, "Aha! You've had a greedy thought. Great! Now I can send one of my retinue to snare you." And so it **seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for.** Once again, the demon king sends one of its followers and **its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and** speak **the Dharma** of the demon king.

[January 1983]

Disciple: I've noticed that every state of the thinking skandha begins with the phrase "in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone, [he is] untroubled by any deviant mental state." What does the phrase "untroubled by any deviant mental state" mean? Does it mean the person is without deviant knowledge and views? Or does it mean that he does not have improper thoughts? When the cultivator reaches this level, what is his state like?

Venerable Master: "In the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone." There has to be unhindered clarity for it to be wonderful, and it must be wonderful

for there to be unhindered clarity. When he attains this state in the feeling skandha, he feels very much at ease. "[He is] untroubled by any deviant mental state." That means he doesn't encounter any such state. If he has some skill in the feeling skandha, he basically shouldn't encounter any deviant mental state. And yet, for no apparent reason, he does encounter one. This deviant mental state is a thief from outside – a deviant demon, ghost, or freak that comes from outside. Originally, he shouldn't have encountered such beings, but in the end he had thoughts of love, seeking, greed, selfishness, or self-benefit. Having reverted to these old faults, he encountered those beings. If he didn't have these old faults, he would be able to continue making progress.

If you understand all the states that come up without being swayed by them, then you won't be troubled by deviant mental states. As soon as you're turned by a state, however, it will be able to trouble you. Basically, he isn't supposed to be troubled by deviant mental states, and yet he gets turned-is this a contradiction? No, it's because his thought of desire has opened the door to thieves. He covertly indulges his greedy desires. He sneaks around engaging in immoral conduct and does not abide by the rules and precepts. He says, "What do precepts matter?" and claims to be enlightened. I don't dare to transgress the rules, because I'm not enlightened.

K3 The person who is possessed causes trouble.

Sutra:

"This person, unaware that he is possessed by a demon, claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks to know the origins of things, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma. His body has an awesome spiritual quality which subdues the seeker. He makes the minds of those gathered beside his seat spontaneously compliant, even before they have heard the Dharma. He says to all those people that the Buddha's Nirvana, Bodhi, and Dharma-body are there before them in the form of his own

physical body. He says, 'The successive begetting of fathers and sons from generation to generation is itself the Dharma-body, which is permanent and never-ending. What you see right now are those very Buddhalands. There are no other pure dwellings or golden features.'

Commentary:

This is really a case of "everyone being a Buddha!" That's just the approach this demon uses. **This person is unaware that he is possessed by a demon.** He doesn't have any idea that he has been caught by a demon, because he gets muddled and loses awareness when he becomes possessed. The demon takes total control and becomes his spokesman. He **claims he has reached** the **unsurpassed** wondrous fruition of **Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks to know the origins of things,** who seeks thorough understanding of the physical world, **he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma. His,** the demon king's, **body has an awesome spiritual quality which subdues the seeker,** the good person who seeks the source. **He makes the minds** of this person and **of those gathered beside his seat spontaneously compliant, even before they have heard the Dharma.** Their minds are already subdued and respectful.

He says to all those people that the Buddha's Nirvana, Bodhi, and Dharma-body are there before them in the form of his own physical body. He says, "What are Bodhi and Nirvana? They are right here in my flesh body. **The successive begetting of fathers and sons from generation to generation is itself the Dharma-body, which is permanent and never-ending.** Fathers beget sons, and the sons grow up to become fathers who in turn beget sons. This succession of generations is the permanent, indestructible Dharma-body. **What you see right now are those very Buddhalands.** These now are the Buddhas' lands. **There are no other pure dwellings or golden features.** There aren't any other pure lands to dwell in or any other golden appearances. Those are all phony." That's how he talks He has a ghostly quality and a

demonic quality. Don't I often use the expression "demonic energy"? This is what demonic energy is. Because he has a demonic energy from the demon possessing him, people are taken in by what he says.

K4 The people become deluded and confused.

Sutra:

"Those people believe and accept his words, forgetting their initial resolve. They offer up their lives, feeling they have obtained something unprecedented. They are all beguiled and confused into thinking he is a Bodhisattva. As they pursue his ideas, they break the Buddha's moral precepts and covertly indulge their greedy desires.

Commentary:

Those people believe and accept his words. When they hear him speaking such principles, they say, "That makes sense: Fathers beget sons, and the sons in turn beget their sons, generation after generation. That's the permanent and indestructible Dharma body. That's actually the way it is." They all believe it **forgetting their initial resolve**. They lose their former proper outlook and proper thought. Their faith in the demon king is far stronger than their faith in the proper Dharma. When demon kings and heterodox sects tell them what to do, they don't dare disobey. When a true teacher tells them to do something, they waver between doubt and belief The demon king confuses them with its demonic power so that they believe whatever it says.

If you told a demon king to lecture on this Sutra, he would not do it. Why not? As soon as he did, his true identity would be exposed. That's why I said that if you asked certain people in America who falsely claim to be experts in the Buddhadharma to explain this Sutra, they wouldn't dare do it. They are afraid of being exposed.

They offer up their bodies and **lives** to the demon king, **feeling they have obtained something unprecedented. They are all**

beguiled and confused into thinking he is a Bodhisattva. They are truly pitiable. They think the demon is a Bodhisattva. **As they pursue his ideas,** studying with the demon and learning his magic, **they** no longer maintain, but instead break, **the Buddha's moral precepts and covertly indulge their greedy desires.** They secretly indulge in lust.

K5 The types of things he says.

Sutra:

"He is fond of saying that the eyes, ears, nose, and tongue are the Pure Land, and that the male and female organs are the true place of Bodhi and Nirvana. Ignorant people believe these filthy words.

Commentary:

How terrible this demon king is! **He is fond of saying that the eyes, ears, nose, and tongue,** body, and mind **are the Pure Land.** "You don't have to look anywhere else for the Dharma door of the Pure Land," he tells them. "It's just the six sense faculties." **And** he also says **that the male and female organs are** the seeds of Bodhi **– the true place of Bodhi and Nirvana.** Can you imagine speaking like that? **Ignorant people believe these filthy words.** People without any knowledge or wisdom say, "Oh? I've never seen or heard anything like this before. So that's what Bodhi and Nirvana are!" With total disregard for their own lives, they race along the road to death for all they are worth. They believe in such impure talk.

K6 Giving the name, and pointing out the harm.

Sutra:

"This is a poisonous ghost or an evil paralysis ghost that in its old age has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person. But when it tires of doing so, it will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.

Commentary:

This is a poisonous ghost or an evil paralysis ghost, also known as a kumbhanda ghost, **that in its old age has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person** who cultivates samadhi. **But when it tires of doing so, it will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.** The authorities intervene and impose restrictions upon the disciples and the teacher. They are arrested and imprisoned.

K7 Instructions to be aware and not become confused.

Sutra:

"You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.

Commentary:

You should be aware of this well **in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration.** Don't fall into the demon king's snare. **If you are confused and do not understand, you** certainly **will fall into the Relentless Hells.**

J5 Greed for spiritual responses.
K1 Samadhi leads to craving and seeking.

Sutra:

"Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samadhi, his mind craves revelations from afar, so he pours all his energy into this intense investigation as he greedily seeks for imperceptible spiritual responses.

Commentary:

Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone, this good person who cultivates samadhi **is untroubled by any deviant mental state and**

experiences perfect bright concentration. At that time he is no longr vulnerable to possession by demons or externalists. **Within samadhi, his mind** suddenly **craves revelations from afar.** "Revelations from afar" refers to knowledge of what is happening, no matter how far away. For instance, he might be in San Francisco and want to know what is happening in New York. If he can know about it, he has experienced what is called a revelation from afar. **So he pours all his energy into this intense investigation as he greedily seeks for imperceptible spiritual responses.** He intensifies his investigation of this matter of faraway revelations, seeking for psychic responses. For example, as soon as he sits in meditation in San Francisco, he may be able to see clearly what his relatives and friends are doing in New York, and hear clearly what they are saying. Later, he finds out that what he saw and heard is exactly what was really happening at the time. That's the kind of spiritual response he would like to attain.

K2 A demon dispatches a deviant force to possess a person.

Sutra:

"At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.

Commentary:

At that time a demon from the heavens notices that your samadhi is about to be perfected, and it becomes jealous. It **seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for** and sends its demon descendant there to wait for an opening. As soon as it sees a chance, **its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.**

K3 The person who is possessed causes trouble.

Sutra:

“This person, completely unaware that he is possessed by a demon, claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks revelations, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma. He briefly appears to his listeners in a body that looks a hundred or a thousand years old. They experience a defiling love for him and cannot bear to part with him. They personally act as his servants, tirelessly making the Four Kinds of Offerings to him. Each member of the assembly believes that this person is his former teacher, his original Good and Wise Advisor. They give rise to love for his Dharma and stick to him as if glued, feeling they have obtained something unprecedented.

Commentary:

This is really dangerous. **This person, completely unaware that he is possessed by a demon, claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana.** He claims he has been certified when he has not and that he has attained what he has not. He hasn’t attained unsurpassed Nirvana, but claims he has. **When he comes to see that good person who** greedily **seeks revelations** from afar and imperceptible spiritual responses, **he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma.**

He, the person possessed by the demon, **briefly appears to his listeners in a body that looks a hundred or a thousand years old.** You should know that this vision is temporary. When the people in the assembly see him with the white hair of an old man and the skin of a child, they think he must be an old cultivator-an old Bhikshu. **They experience a defiling love and cannot bear to part with him.** This defiling love refers to a devotion that stains and pollutes them. Once there is love, there is defilement. With defilement, you lose purity.

All the listeners want to follow this demon day and night. Why? They are deluded by its charisma. **They personally act as his** slaves and **servants, tirelessly making the Four Kinds of Offerings to him.** The Four Kinds of Offerings are: (1) food and drink, (2) clothing, (3) bedding and sitting mats, and (4) medicine. They never grow weary of making such offerings to him.

Again, one wonders why. A genuine cultivator, a true disciple of the Buddha, will not have people draw near him and serve him in this way. It is only because the demon has a kind of charisma that everyone draws near him and likes to stay with him.

Each member of the assembly believes that this person is his former teacher. They get so confused that each believes the possessed person was **his original Good and Wise Advisor.** They think, “Oh! He was my teacher in the past!” **They give rise to love for his Dharma and stick to him as if glued, feeling they have obtained something unprecedented.** “It’s never been like this before,” they think.

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She does whatever he tells her to do. It’s not as simple as making the four kinds of offerings of food, clothing, bedding, and medicines. She has to offer her body, mind, and life to him and engage in lust with him. The difference lies in the practice of lust. If a person has lust, then what he does is deviant. If he has no lust then he is proper.

You should never listen to a person who says, “When you are enlightened, you can do whatever you want including indulge in lust.” Those are the words of a big demon king. Before you are enlightened, you may transgress the rules because you do not know any better. But if you say that you are enlightened, that you understand, and yet you deliberately transgress the rules and precepts, then what enlightenment have you obtained? It’s as if you are driving in reverse.

People nowadays don’t investigate true principles. All they know about is getting enlightened. They hear someone say that

after he is enlightened, he doesn't have to follow the rules, so they repeat his words and say: "Oh! He doesn't have to follow any rules. Since he's enlightened, he can smoke, drink, play around with women, and do anything at all."

The most important thing is lust: if he has lust and he indulges, in impure conduct all the time, then he's a demon. If he is not greedy for money and he is free of lust, then he is genuine.

In this case, he announces to those he meets, "In a former life you were my wife," or "You were the empress," or "You were my such and such when I was the emperor," and so forth; he makes these statements in order to arouse lust in people. By doing this in public, he hopes to cheat people and exploit the situation.

Again, one wonders why. A genuine cultivator, a true disciple of the Buddha, will not have people draw near him and serve him in this way. It is only because the demon has a kind of charisma that everyone draws near him and likes to stay with him.

K4 The cultivator becomes deluded and confused.

Sutra:

"The good person is beguiled and fooled into thinking the other is a Bodhisattva. Attracted to the other's thinking, he breaks the Buddha's moral precepts and covertly indulges his greedy desires.

Commentary:

The good person is beguiled and fooled to the utmost **into thinking** that because **the other** person can transform himself, he **is a** Buddha or a **Bodhisattva**. Fox spirits can display transformations and so can goblins, demons, ghosts, and weird creatures. But it never occurs to him that the ability to transform does not necessarily mean someone is a Bodhisattva or a Buddha. What good roots does he have to enable him to encounter real Bodhisattvas or Buddhas? **Attracted to the other's thinking**, he draws near the person who is possessed by the demon. **He breaks the Buddha's moral precepts**. This is the important point. How do

we know he is a demon? We can tell from the fact that he breaks the precepts **and covertly indulges his greedy desires** by engaging in lust.

K5 The types of things he says.

Sutra:

"He is fond of saying, 'In a past life, in a certain incarnation, I rescued a certain person who was then my wife (or my mistress, or my brother). Now I have come to rescue you again. We will stay together and go to another world to make offerings to a certain Buddha.' Or he may say, 'There is a Heaven of Great Brilliance where a Buddha now dwells. It is the resting place of all Tathagatas.' Ignorant people believe his ravings and lose their original resolve.

Commentary:

Whenever he sees someone, **he is fond of saying** the same things that Liu Jintong, whom I mentioned before, used to say. She would tell her victim that he had been her son in one past life and her husband in another past life. Now this person says, **"In a past life, in a certain incarnation,"** perhaps in his hundred-and-first life or his hundred-and-second life, **"I rescued a certain person who was then my wife," or** he says, "who was then **my mistress**," or, "who was then **my brother**," and so forth. **"Now I have come to rescue you again. We will** always **stay together and** never part. We will **go to another world to make offerings to a certain Buddha."**

Or he may say, "There is a Heaven of Great Brilliance that we are going to.**"** Actually the heaven he refers to is the place where the demon king resides. He says, "It is the place **where a** true **Buddha now dwells**, and all the Buddhas you presently believe in are phony. **It is the resting place of all Tathagatas.** When they are tired from teaching and rescuing beings in the world, they go to the Heaven of Great Brilliance to rest." When those **ignorant people**

hear him they **believe his ravings, and** as a result they **lose their original resolve,** which had been based on proper faith.

K6 Giving the name and pointing out the harm.

Sutra:

"This is a pestilence ghost that in its old age has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person. But when it tires of doing so, it will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.

Commentary:

This is a pestilence ghost that, after some three thousand or five thousand years, **in its old age has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person,** attempting to destroy his samadhi power. **But** after a while, **when** it has played all its tricks and the game isn't new anymore, **it tires of doing so. It** becomes bored and **will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.** Once the demon goes, the person will lose all his awesomeness and charisma. Then people will start to doubt him. Eventually he will be taken to court and put in jail.

K7 Instructions to be aware and not become confused.

Sutra:

"You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.

Commentary:

You should be aware of this in advance. You should awaken to this principle beforehand **and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration.** Don't fall into the demons' snare. Don't enter the demonic cycle of birth and death. **If you are confused and do not understand** this principle, **you will fall into the Relentless Hells** for sure.

J6 Greed for peace and quiet.
K1 Samadhi leads to craving and seeking.

Sutra:

“Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samadhi, his mind craves deep absorption, so he restrains himself with energetic diligence and likes to dwell in secluded places as he greedily seeks for peace and quiet.

Commentary:

Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone, this good person who is cultivating samadhi **is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samadhi, his mind** develops a craving. He **craves deep absorption** in that principle. **So he restrains himself with energetic diligence and likes to dwell in secluded places as he greedily seeks for peace and quiet.** He maintains firm self-control and is very strict with himself. He puts great effort into cultivation. He likes to reside in places that are *yin*, lacking in sunlight. He prefers places where there aren’t any people, perhaps a cave somewhere deep in the mountains or in some isolated valley. He picks a secluded spot, for he likes still and quiet places. Because he is too greedy for peace and quiet, demons will come. In cultivation, people should not be greedy. Don’t be greedy for good things, and don’t be greedy for bad things. The ordinary mind is the Way. Just act ordinary, and don’t be greedy. No matter what you may be greedy for, it’s not right.

K2 A demon dispatches a deviant force to possess a person.

Sutra:

“At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another

person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.

Commentary:

This is the same situation as before. **At that time a demon** king **from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for.** When the chance comes, **its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.** It sends a member of its demonic retinue to possess another person who then comes and speaks the Sutras and the Dharma for him.

K3 The demon's words and deeds that mislead others.

Sutra:

"This person, unaware that he is possessed by a demon, claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks seclusion, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma. He causes all of his listeners to think they know their karma from the past. Or he may say to someone there, 'You haven't died yet, but you have already become an animal.' Then he instructs another person to step on the first person's 'tail' and suddenly the first person cannot stand up. At that point, all in the assembly pour out their hearts in respect and admiration for him. If someone has a thought, the demon detects it immediately. He establishes intense ascetic practices that exceed the Buddha's moral precepts. He slanders Bhikshus, scolds his assembly of disciples, and exposes people's private affairs without fear of ridicule or rejection. He is fond of foretelling calamities and auspicious events, and when they come to pass, he is not wrong in the slightest.

Commentary:

This person is **unaware that he is possessed by a demon.** He **claims,** as demon kings do, that **he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana.** What proof is there that someone is a demon? For the most part, demons praise themselves.

They say, "Do you know me? I've already obtained Nirvana." Or it may be, "I've realized the first fruition of Arhatship," or, "I've reached the fourth fruition of Arhatship;" or, "I'm a Bodhisattva now. Do you recognize me?"

As soon as someone talks like that you don't have to ask to know he is a demon. A Buddha would never say, "I'm a Buddha. Hurry up and bow to me. If you don't bow now, you'll miss your chance. Since I'm a Buddha, you're really stupid if you don't bow to me." Anyone who claims to be a Buddha, a Bodhisattva, or an Arhat is nothing but a demon. You can know immediately, without question, that it is a demon talking. A Buddha would never say he was a Buddha. A Bodhisattva who has come into the world would never say he was a Bodhisattva. Even if other people said he was a Bodhisattva, he would not admit it. Even if he were a Buddha, and someone said, "Yes, I know you are a Buddha," he would not acknowledge it. One who is truly enlightened would not admit to that either. If someone says, "I'm enlightened," don't be taken in by him – he doesn't even measure up to a dog. Don't listen to his bluster and self-aggrandizing.

Listen to Sutras so that you can have a demon-spotting mirror. Then when demons, ghosts, and weird beings show themselves, you will recognize them. But if you don't understand the Buddhadharma, you will not know what they are saying, and you will be cheated by them.

When he, the person who has been possessed by the demon, **comes to see that good person who seeks seclusion, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma.**

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This "person" is referring to the cultivator, not to another person. He has been possessed by a demon, but he doesn't realize it. He thinks that he has really become enlightened and realized the fruition. He thinks, "What great spiritual skill I have now!" He is not aware of his own mistake. "When people come to see that good person…" This phrase is referring to good men and women from

outside, who come in quest of the Dharma. They want to hear him speak the Dharma because they know that he has spiritual powers. When they come, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma to teach and transform them.

Now we are bringing up each person's opinion for everyone to look into, and we don't have to say which opinion is right and which one is wrong. We are studying true principles; true principles are real gold. Whatever does not agree with true principle is wrong. Why do I say that the *Shurangama Sutra* is real? Because it explains the principles so clearly and honestly that it exposes the demons from the heavens and those of external ways for what they are. It exposes those who pretend to be Good and Wise Advisors, so they have no recourse but to claim that the Shurangama Sutra is false. They try to pass off fish eyes as pearls; they stir up confusion and then exploit the situation.

[January 1983, another day]

In this case, people from outside come and invite him. He doesn't go to them first. "When people come to see that good person" means people from outside approach the cultivator who seeks seclusion. They invite him to go explain the Sutras and speak Dharma, and then he goes. Do you understand? It is absolutely impermissible to alter the Sutra text. This is the only meaning and there is no other explanation. Any other explanation would not make sense; it would be a forced and artificial interpretation.

He causes all of his listeners to think they know their karma from the past. Each person feels he knows, as if in a dream, what he was in his previous lives. One says, "Oh, in my last life I was a watchdog." Another person says, "In my previous life I was a cat." Someone else says, "In my past life I was a chicken." Another person says, "In my past life I was a cow." None of them were human beings.

Or he, the demon, **may say to someone there, "You haven't died yet but you have already become an animal."** What does he say? He says, "You were a dog in your past life, and even though

you haven't died yet, you've become a dog again. Don't you believe me?" **Then he instructs another person to step on the first person's "tail."** He says to someone else, "He doesn't believe what I'm telling him. Go behind him and stand on his tail and then see if he can get up." Then that person stamps his foot on the ground and says he is standing the first person's tail, **and suddenly the first person cannot stand up.** Wouldn't you say those were great spiritual powers? After the demon said the person had a tail and told someone to step on it, the person could not get up. The person has no choice but to believe. "He says I'm an animal, and now I really do have a tail. Otherwise, how could he step on it and prevent me from standing up?"

At that, all in the assembly pour out their hearts in respect and admiration for him. "It's magic," they say. "He knows the person is going to be an animal even before the person has died. He must be a Buddha or a living Bodhisattva." Actually, they've been duped by a ghost and don't even realize it. They see a ghost or a demon king, and mistake it for a Bodhisattva. Living beings are really upside down.

If someone has a doubt, the demon detects it immediately. Someone in the assembly may be skeptical and think, "How can that be? It isn't reasonable." As soon as he starts to doubt, the demon knows it and says, "So you don't believe me?" These people take one look, "Oh! He's really a Bodhisattva! I didn't say what was on my mind, and he knew about it He exposed my doubt. That's incredible." After that he doesn't dare to disbelieve.

He establishes intense ascetic practices that exceed the Buddha's moral precepts. He says, "The Buddha's Vinaya is not enough. I'm establishing a new Vinaya for you. I want you to be new Buddhas, and I am creating a new Buddhism. The previous one is obsolete and inapplicable. This is the scientific era, the nuclear age, and everything must be modernized and improved. The old way of thinking is no longer useful. The old Buddhism cannot be

applied either.” That is how he changes Buddhism, He says that people can be Elders or Bhikshus or anything they want.

[January 1983]

There are old-fashioned religions and trendy religions. No one believes in religions they consider old-fashioned, but everyone chases madly after trendy things. Of all the Dharma spoken by the Buddha, the most important part is precepts. Nowadays, people consider the Buddha really old fashioned, and they want to find something more up-to-date. Their search takes them fight into the demon king’s lair. None of the external sects are free from greed and desire. They are insatiable, and they desire to benefit themselves at the expense of others.

I cannot say that we at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas are definitely in accord with the Proper Dharma. Nevertheless, I ask each of you who has followed me for so many years: Have I ever asked you to hand your wealth and property over to the temple? Why have I never done this? Because I’m very old-fashioned. I want to uphold and honor the precepts. The precepts tell us to give to others, not to demand that others give to us while we don’t give anything to them.

At the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, our revenue comes very naturally. We don’t scheme for contributions. We receive enough income as it is. If we were to try to cheat people of their money, how would we be any different from demons? People who tell others to donate their personal and family wealth and their own lives and their families’ lives to the Way-place are totally misguided. I’m not like them. I do not want anyone’s wealth, nor do I desire any beautiful women. I want neither fame nor a good reputation. In fact, I have quite a notorious reputation, not a good one. The very mention of my name gives some people a headache, especially those goblins, demons, ghosts, and freaks.

He slanders Bhikshus, saying, “Bhikshu? What’s a Bhikshu?” He makes fun of the name. He says, “You say he’s a Bhikshu? I say

he’s a bach!” [A bach is a kind of carp. In Chinese, “Bhikshu” and “bach” end with the same sound.]

He also **scolds his assembly of disciples.** He scolds his disciples however he pleases. He may tell them, “You’re a dog,” or “You are a cat,” or “You’re a rat,” or “You’re a pig.” The disciples hear his scolding and accept whatever he says, thinking he is a Bodhisattva. “You say I’m a pig, so I’m a pig.” “You say I’m a dog, so I’m a dog.” “You say I’m a cat, so I’m a cat.” They don’t dare talk back. This demon king has such tremendous power that he manages to delude people into believing everything he says.

And he exposes people’s private affairs. For instance, a man and a woman may have done something indecent, and he will say to the woman, “You did such and such with a certain man in a certain place.”

The woman thinks to herself, “How did he know?”

Or he may expose them in public, saying, “These two are despicable. They did something improper, something unspeakable, in such-and-such a place. Ask her about it – she wouldn’t dare deny it.” It turns out that they have in fact done it, and they don’t dare to deny it. He does this to show people that he has spiritual powers and that he knows everything that is going on. He exposes their private matters **without fear of ridicule or rejection.** He divulges people’s secrets and is not afraid that they will scorn him.

He is always **fond of foretelling calamities and auspicious events.** He likes to say things such as, “You’d better be careful. Tomorrow is going to be an unlucky day for you. Someone might try to poison you, so watch what you eat or you may die of poisoning.” He foretells both unlucky and lucky events, **and when they come to pass, he is not wrong in the slightest.** When the events happen, they turn out to be exactly as he predicted. So how could people not believe in him? Such demon kings are far more efficacious than Bodhisattvas.

K4 Giving the name and pointing out the harm.
K5 Instructions to be aware and not become confused.

Sutra:

"This is a ghost with great powers that in its old age has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person. But when it tires of doing so, it will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law. You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.

Commentary:

This is a ghost with great powers that in its old age has become a demon. Ghosts become demons when they get old, just as people who don't practice virtuous deeds become rascals in their old age. As I have told you, the Chinese have a saying, "To be old and not to have died is to be a rascal." when people are old and experienced, they can make trouble. In the same way, old ghosts become demons. **It disturbs and confuses the good person.** Jealous of the cultivation of other people, the ghost destroys their samadhi power. **But when it** eventually **tires of doing so, it will leave the other person's body** and no longer possess him.

Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law. That's equivalent to their falling into the hells. There's a saying:

Someone deluded transmits his delusion,
So after the transmission, neither one understands.
The teacher falls into the hells,
And the disciple burrows in after him.

The same principle applies here. Because he hasn't met a teacher who truly understands, the disciple is also muddled. when he sees his teacher going to the hells, he follows his teacher there. The teacher turns around and says, "what did you come here for?"

The disciple replies, "I saw you coming here, so of course I came along."

The teacher says, "Oh no! This isn't a good place. You shouldn't have come."

"But you came first. How could I not have followed you? I study with you, after all. I should go wherever you go," says the disciple.

The teacher thinks, "Ah, I've landed in the hells myself, and brought my disciple with me as well. I've really done wrong by you. I'm very sorry!" **You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.**

J7 Greed to know past lives.
K1 Samadhi leads to craving and seeking.

Sutra:

"Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samadhi, his mind craves more knowledge and understanding, so he diligently toils at examining and probing as he greedily seeks to know past lives.

Commentary:

Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samadhi, his mind craves more knowledge and understanding. While in samadhi, he wants to know more things, to have the knowledge of past lives. He works with intense vigor and does not fear suffering. **So he diligently toils at examining and probing as he greedily seeks to know past lives.**

K2 A demon dispatches a deviant force to possess a person.

Sutra:

"At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma. This person, unaware that he is possessed by a demon, claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks knowledge, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma.

Commentary:

At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma. This person, unaware that he is possessed by a demon, not realizing that he's been taken over by a demon, **claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks knowledge, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma.**

K3 The demon's words and deeds that mislead others.

Sutra:

"There in the Dharma Assembly, inexplicably, that person may obtain an enormous precious pearl. The demon may sometimes change into an animal that holds the pearl or other jewels, bamboo tablets, tallies, talismans, letters, and other unusual things in its mouth. The demon first gives the objects to the person and afterwards possesses him. Or he may fool his audience by burying the objects underground and then saying that a 'moonlight pearl' is illuminating the place. Thereupon the audience feels they have obtained something unique. He may eat only medicinal herbs and not partake of prepared food. Or he may eat only one sesame seed and one grain of wheat a day and still look robust. That is because he is sustained by the

power of the demon. He slanders Bhikshus and scolds his assembly of disciples without fear of ridicule or rejection.

Commentary:

There in the Dharma Assembly, inexplicably, for no reason whatsoever, in the place where Dharma is being spoken, **that person may obtain an enormous precious pearl.** It may be a diamond or something like a "wish-fulfilling pearl." **The demon may sometimes change into an animal.** The person who is speaking the Dharma changes into an animal himself, explaining that Bodhisattvas can transform into anything. The animal **that** he changes into **holds the pearl or other jewels, bamboo tablets,** or **tallies.** Tallies were used for official purposes in ancient times. Words were written on a piece of bamboo, which was then split so that part of the words appeared on each piece. when it was time to use the tallies, they would be put together. If the tallies matched, it would be a certified match. If the two parts did not match, that would mean it was inauthentic. **Talismans** are used to subdue and catch demons, ghosts, goblins, and weird creatures. **And** the animal might carry **letters and other unusual things in its mouth.** All of these are strange, rare, and valuable objects. **The demon first gives the objects to the person and afterwards possesses him.**

Or he may fool his audience by burying the objects underground and then saying that a 'moonlight pearl' is illuminating the place. He buries the pearl in the ground and then tricks his listeners, telling them, "There is a pearl which resembles the bright moon, emitting light there." **Thereupon the audience feels they have obtained something unique.** "Wow! This has to be for real. This can't be a demon," they say. He is clearly a demon, yet they insist that he isn't. Alas for those who listen to his Dharma!

He may eat only medicinal herbs and not partake of prepared food. The demon often eats only herbs, not regular food. He doesn't eat good food. He may eat ginseng or other tonics and nourishing supplements. when I was in Hong Kong I met a person who said he didn't eat ordinary food. He acted as a medium for

people who sought long life, sons, blessings, or other things. whenever he stayed in people's homes, he would announce he didn't eat ordinary food. What did he eat then? Walnuts. Walnuts are very nourishing-full of oil. If you eat them, your brain will be very good. You only have to eat a little to be full; if you usually eat one bowl of rice you only have to eat half a bowl of walnuts to be full. He also ate pine nuts. At any rate, he ate the most nutritious items. **Or he may eat only one sesame seed and one grain of wheat a day and still look robust.** Even so, he stays really fat, fatter than a pig. **That is because he is sustained by the power of the demon.**

He slanders Bhikshus and scolds his assembly of disciples without fear of ridicule or rejection. He does nothing but slander those who have left the home-life. "Left-home people? what home did they leave? They don't cultivate at all. Left-home people aren't greedy for money? The more the better is their attitude." Or he says, "Why do you believe in him? He's just a person, after all. You're really an idiot." when people have faith in the Bhikshus, he calls them idiots. He scolds his own disciples, calling them animals and all sorts of things. He's totally unafraid of any rebuttals.

[May 1989]

Disciple: "When he comes to see that good person who seeks knowledge, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma."

Venerable Master: This means the demon. It goes to see the person who seeks knowledge of past lives.

Disciple: "There in the Dharma Assembly, inexplicably, that person may obtain an enormous precious pearl. The demon may sometimes change into an animal." Is this another demon?

Venerable Master: No, it's the same one.

Disciple: Does the person possessed by the demon transform into an animal?

Venerable Master: Yes. To everyone, he appears to be an animal. He takes on a bizarre appearance. "First, the demon gives

them to the person, and afterwards possesses him." "The person" is the one who seeks knowledge of past lives.

Disciple: The person who seeks knowledge of past lives is already possessed by a demon and has changed into an animal. And he's also holding the pearl and other gems in his mouth.

Venerable Master: He gives them to the people who are listening to the Dharma. It isn't just one person. Perhaps he selects one among them. This is all hypothetical. It doesn't necessarily have to happen that way. Don't think that it has to be that way just because the Buddha said it. This is an example, and you should be able to understand other situations by inference. Don't be so rigid. Be flexible in your understanding, so that the next time such a situation occurs, you'll know, "Oh, this is the same as that example." Here he turns into an animal, but in another case he might turn into a Buddha.

Disciple: What about when it "Afterwards possesses him"? Whom does the demon possess?

Venerable Master: The demon possesses everyone.

Disciple: Are there other demons that come to possess everyone?

Venerable Master: No, the same demon can have innumerable transformation bodies. It can possess that person as well as other people.

Disciple: So it jumps around from one to the other?

Venerable Master: It doesn't jump. It isn't just one; it can transform into many.

Disciple: Oh, so it can possess you, and it can also possess someone else. I never knew demons were so powerful!

Venerable Master: Demons are about as powerful as Buddhas. It's just that the one is deviant and the other is proper. What demons do is deviant, and what Buddhas do is proper. That's the difference. There's a person from Taiwan who has had such experiences. We

can ask him to speak now. [To the layman] Tell everyone the whole story about how the demon transmitted the mind-dharma to you.

Layman: Venerable Master, Dharma Masters, and Good Advisors. I will talk about my experiences in non-Buddhist religions, what I saw and understood. Perhaps my experiences are not quite the same as the states caused by the demons from the heavens described by the Buddha. These demons can transform in endless ways, and what I saw is only one of their states. As I share my experience, keep in mind that it is not the whole picture. The demons from the heavens manifest in many ways. They may or may not go through a medium. If you practice with an improper mind in an external sect, the demon can appear to you in the form of a person when you are meditating; it doesn't need a medium.

This Sutra text says, "There in the Dharma Assembly, inexplicably, that person may obtain an enormous precious pearl." Because it says "There in the Dharma Assembly," I think that there are three parties: the medium, the speaker of Dharma, and the listeners. The Venerable Master interprets "the person" as referring to the possessed person. That is one interpretation. However, from what I understand and from the other explanations that I've read, I think "the person" refers to someone who hasn't been possessed yet. Why? Because the Buddha spoke the *Shurangama Sutra* in order to warn those who are not yet possessed, but whose minds have already gone astray. If they are not alert they will be possessed by demons. The Buddha wants to warn them. When the skandhas of form, feeling, and thinking come to an end, you should be especially cautious, for you may experience many of these states, and you need to know how to deal with them.

Two years ago, I went to the home of a layman who shaved his head like a monk's. He said that while meditating, a demon from the heavens possessed him and said, "Let me give you a 'wordless book from heaven,' or such and such a Sutra." People went there because they were looking for a quick way to get enlightened. At that Way-place they used all kinds of methods, and I either saw or

heard them talk about every one of the first thirty skandha-demon states. For example, I saw the tallies, gems, and treasure troves. I also witnessed them eating meals of one sesame seed and one grain of wheat, or eating gluttonously. For example, in the case of “obtaining an enormous pearl” when you are meditating, someone will say, “May I give you this pearl?” If your mind is moved and you wish to have it, then through the medium, you stretch your hands out to take it. Once you accept it, you’re in for trouble.

I’ll talk about my personal experience. When I went to a certain place two years ago, the layman told me, “I can give you a wordless book from heaven. If you practice according to it for three years, you can obtain great spiritual powers.” That day my mind was rather swayed, and I thought, “If you want to give me a ‘wordless book from heaven’, fine.”

He said, “To accept it, raise both hands, and I’ll give it to you.”

After I received it, I went home, and the next day I kept reciting things that I did not understand. It sounded like Japanese, and then Thai, and then I was singing army songs dating from the Japanese *Meiji* reign, songs which I had never sung before. Although my voice is usually pretty bad, when I was singing those army songs, I could sing very high and very low, and it sounded better than the singers on television. I think the “wordless book from heaven” is something like the tallies mentioned in the Sutra.

There are two possibilities in the place where the Dharma is spoken. The first is that you have not been possessed by the demon, and you cannot see what is happening. If you have not ended the form skandha, then you cannot see, either. In the other case, when you are meditating, the possessed person can see, and so can you.

In one case, you and the possessed person are both in samadhi, and you can see whatever he gives you. You can also see the external state, but it’s just an illusion that he conjures up. In the other case, you cannot see, but your mind moves. The person says, “Can I give you this thing?” If you say, “Yes,” then things change. However, if you say, “I don’t want it,” then the demon from the

heaven cannot possess you, because it has to follow its own rules, too. As far as I know, all the external sects in Taiwan fall under the first thirty skandha-demon states, before the thinking and consciousness skandhas have been ended.

Our present interpretation may differ somewhat from the real incidents I just spoke of. In such situations, the demons from the heavens may appear in these ways to harm you and prevent you from attaining the Way. Since everyone is at a different level of cultivation, they appear in different ways each time. I just wanted to offer this for everyone to consider.

Sutra:

"He is fond of talking about treasure troves in other locations, or of remote and hidden places where sages and worthies of the ten directions dwell. Those who follow him often see strange and unusual people.

Commentary:

He is fond of talking about treasure troves in other locations. What does he like to say? He says, "Hey, in a certain place there are gold, silver, and all kinds of jewels. Do you want some?" He spreads such rumors to delude the assembly. **Or** he is fond of talking **of remote and hidden places where sages and worthies of the ten directions dwell.** He tells people, "There are Buddhas and Bodhisattvas cultivating there without your knowing it." **Those who follow him often see strange and unusual people.** They may give off light or have other strange characteristics.

K4 Giving the name and pointing out the harm.

Sutra:

"This is a ghost or spirit of the mountain forests, earth, cities, rivers, and mountains that in its old age has become a demon. The person it possesses may advocate promiscuity and violate the Buddha's precepts. He may covertly indulge in the five desires with his followers. Or he may appear to be vigorous, eating only wild plants. His behavior is erratic, and he disturbs

and confuses the good person. But when the demon tires, it will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.

Commentary:

What kind of creature is this? **This is a ghost or spirit of the mountain forests, earth, cities, rivers, and mountains that in its old age,** after a long time, **has become a demon. The person it possesses may advocate promiscuity and violate the Buddha's precepts.** His lust-filled thoughts cause him to break the precepts. **He may covertly indulge in the five desires with his followers,** the people who are with him. The five desires are wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep. **Or he may appear to be vigorous, eating only wild plants. His behavior is erratic.** He does not sit in meditation or cultivate. He only engages in unbeneficial ascetic practices, **and he disturbs and confuses the good person,** causing him to stop cultivating. **But** after a while, **when the demon tires** and grows bored, **it will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.**

K5 Instructions to be aware and not become confused.

Sutra:

"You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.

Commentary:

You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. Awaken to this early on, and don't fall into the demon's trap. Don't enter the demonic cycle of birth and death. **If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.**

J8 Greed for spiritual powers.
K1 Samadhi leads to craving and seeking.

Sutra:

"Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samadhi, his mind craves spiritual powers and all manner of transformations, so he investigates the source of transformations as he greedily seeks for spiritual powers.

Commentary:

Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone, this good person who is cultivating the Way and practicing samadhi **is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samadhi, his mind craves spiritual powers.** He has another false thought. He decides he wants to have great spiritual powers **and all manner of transformations,** so that he can display the Eighteen Transformations in midair. He wants to be able to emit water from the upper part of his body and fire from the lower part he wants to emit fire from the upper part of his body and water from the lower part. He longs to be like the Arhats who can manifest these Eighteen Transformations while floating in the air, **so he investigates the** fundamental **source,** the principle **of** these **transformations, as he greedily seeks for spiritual powers.**

[January 1983]

A person is still vulnerable to possession by demons even after he has broken through the form and feeling skandhas. Breaking through the skandhas of form, feeling, thinking, formations, and consciousness is a very ordinary matter. It doesn't mean he truly has samadhi power and won't get possessed anymore. He is at a very high level; but even at that high level, he can still be possessed. Why? Because he still harbors love and greed in his mind. He may be greedy for knowledge, for spiritual powers, or for

responses. His greed opens the door. He cannot become free from demonic possession just by thinking about it. In fact, he will only be more liable to become possessed.

K2 A demon dispatches a deviant force to possess a person.

Sutra:

"At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.

Commentary:

The demon that has been lying in wait sees its chance and sends a spirit to possess a person, through whom it speaks the Sutras and the Dharma.

K3 The demon's words and deeds that mislead others.

Sutra:

"This person, truly unaware that he is possessed by a demon, also claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks spiritual powers, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma. The possessed person may hold fire in his hands and, grasping a portion of it, put a flame on the head of each listener in the Fourfold Assembly. The flames on top of their heads are several feet high, yet they are not hot and no one is burned. Or he may walk on water as if on dry land; or he may sit motionless in the air; or he may enter into a bottle or stay in a bag; or he may pass through window panes and walls without obstruction. Only when attacked by weapons does he feel ill at ease. He declares himself to be a Buddha and, wearing the clothing of a lay person, receives bows from Bhikshus. He slanders dhyana meditation and the moral regulations. He scolds his disciples and exposes people's private affairs without fear of ridicule or rejection.

Commentary:

This person is **truly unaware that he is possessed by a demon.** He **also claims** that **he** himself **has reached** the wondrous fruition of **unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks spiritual powers, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma.**

The possessed person may hold fire in one of **his hands and, grasping a portion of it** with his other hand, **put a flame on the head of each listener in the Fourfold Assembly.** One by one he puts a flame atop the heads of each of the people in the audience. **The flames on top of their heads are several feet high.** When he puts the flames there, they are small, and they grow bit by bit until they are several feet high. **Yet they are not hot and no one is burned.** They do not spread or set anything else on fire. **Or he,** the possessed person, **may walk on water as if on dry,** flat **land; or he may** walk or **sit motionless in the air.** There is nothing holding him up in the air, but he can sit in it.

Or he may enter into a bottle or stay in a bag; or he may pass through window panes and walls without obstruction. The doors and windows may be closed, but he can easily pass through them without opening them. He's not hindered in the least.

Only when attacked by weapons does he feel ill at ease. He is afraid of being cut by knives and pierced by spears. That is because he still has a physical form which obstructs him. Although he has five of the spiritual powers, he still fears being wounded by weapons. **He declares himself to be a Buddha and, wearing the clothing of a lay person,** not the attire of left-home people, **receives bows from Bhikshus.** Dressed as a layperson, he receives bows from left-home people. **He slanders dhyana meditation and the moral regulations** as being useless and incorrect. And **he scolds his** own **disciples and exposes people's private affairs.** He discloses people's secrets **without fear of ridicule or rejection** by others.

Sutra:

"He often talks about spiritual powers and self-mastery. He may cause people to see visions of Buddhalands, but they are unreal and arise merely from the ghost's power to delude people. He praises the indulgence of lust and does not condemn lewd conduct. He uses indecent means to transmit his Dharma.

Commentary:

He often talks about various sorts of **spiritual powers and self-mastery. He may cause people to see visions of Buddhalands** throughout the ten directions, **but they are unreal and arise merely from the ghost's power to delude people.** He himself does not have any real skill in cultivation. What **he praises** most is **the indulgence of lust.** He says, "It's truly the most wonderful thing there is. It's the source of Bodhi and Nirvana." **And** he **does not condemn lewd conduct.** He says, "There's nothing wrong with it. Don't bother holding precepts." **He uses indecent means to transmit his Dharma.** He uses all this impure behavior as a means to transmit the Dharma.

K4 Giving the name and pointing out the harm.

Sutra:

"This is a powerful nature spirit: a mountain sprite, a sea sprite, a wind sprite, a river sprite, an earth sprite, or a grass-and-tree sprite that has evolved over long ages. It may be a dragon-goblin; or a rishi who has been reborn as a goblin; or again a rishi who, having reached the end of his appointed time, should have died, but whose body does not decay and is possessed by a goblin. In its old age it has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person. But when it tires of doing so, it will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.

Commentary:

This is a powerful nature spirit: a mountain sprite, a sea sprite, a wind sprite, a river sprite, an earth sprite; or a grass-

and-tree sprite that has evolved over long ages. It may be a dragon-goblin; or it may be **a rishi who,** having cultivated for perhaps a thousand, two thousand, three thousand, or five thousand years, **has been reborn as a** demon-**goblin** at the end of his life.

Or again, it may be **a rishi who, having reached the end of his appointed time, should have died, but whose body** after his death **does not decay** or change, **and is possessed by a goblin.**

In its old age it has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person's power of samadhi. **But** eventually, **when it tires of doing so, it will leave the other person's body.** So long as the demon is there, the person possesses awesome spiritual power. But once the demon leaves, **then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law** and their activities will be curtailed.

K5 Instructions to be aware and not become confused.

Sutra:

"You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.

Commentary:

Ananda, **you should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the** demonic **cycle of transmigration.** Don't fall into the demons' snare. **If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.**

J9 Greed for profound emptiness.
K1 Samadhi leads to craving and seeking.

Sutra:

"Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samadhi, his mind craves to enter

cessation, so he investigates the nature of transformations as he greedily seeks for profound emptiness.

Commentary:

He looks into how things in a state of existence can transform into nothingness, and how nothingness can transform into things which exist. He studies the way these transformations take place, hoping to experience a pro-found state of emptiness.

K2 A demon dispatches a deviant force to possess a person.

Sutra:

"At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.

Commentary:

At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. The demon watches and waits, and when it sees a chance, **its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.** The demon speaks through that person's mouth.

K3 The demon's words and deeds that mislead others.

Sutra:

"This person, unaware that he is possessed by a demon, claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks emptiness, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma. In the midst of the great assembly, his physical form suddenly disappears, and no one in the assembly can see him. Then out of nowhere, he abruptly reappears. He can appear and disappear at will, or he can make his body transparent like crystal. From his hands and feet he releases the fragrance of sandalwood, or his excrement and urine may be sweet as thick rock candy. He slanders the precepts and is contemptuous of those who have left the home life.

Commentary:

This person is **unaware** and does not realize **that he is possessed by a demon** from the heavens. He **claims he has** already **reached** the wonderful fruition of **unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks** the deep **emptiness** of cessation, **he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma. In the midst of the great assembly, his physical form suddenly disappears, and no one in the assembly can see him.** The demon's spiritual powers cause the possessed person's body to suddenly vanish. He was there speaking the Dharma, but suddenly no one can see him. This is the "emptiness of people and dharmas." People and dharmas are both gone. **Then,** after a few minutes, from **out of nowhere, he abruptly reappears. He can appear and disappear at will.** If he wants to appear, he appears. If he wants to disappear, he disappears. He is in control and can do either with ease.

Or he can make his body appear **transparent like crystal,** so you can see right through it. **From his hands and feet,** at the flick of a wrist, **he releases the fragrance of sandalwood, or his excrement and urine may be sweet as thick rock candy. He slanders the precepts.** He says, "Don't bother about holding precepts. That is a Small Vehicle matter. Why should you hold them? There is no great meaning in it." **And** he **is contemptuous of those who have left the home-life.** He says, "Don't leave the home-life. If you want to cultivate, go ahead and cultivate. You don't have to leave home to do it. What difference is there between being a layperson and a left-home person anyway?" That's how he slanders left-home people.

Sutra:

"He often says that there is no cause and no effect, that once we die, we are gone forever, that there is no afterlife, and that there are no ordinary people and no sages. Although he has obtained a state of empty stillness, he covertly indulges his

greedy desires. Those who give in to his lust also adopt his views of emptiness and deny cause and effect.

Commentary:

He often says that there is no cause and effect. "Don't believe in the law of cause and effect," he says. "It's totally wrong. There is no such thing." He says **that once we die we are gone forever.** "Once you die, you are gone forever, just like a light that gets snuffed out." He says **that there is no afterlife, and that there are no ordinary people and no sages.** "There's no such thing as rebirth, nor are there common people or sages. Those are just figures of speech."

Although he has obtained a state of empty stillness, he covertly indulges his greedy desires. Although he's arrived at some sort of theory of emptiness, he indulges in lust on the sly. **Those who give in to his lust adopt his views of emptiness.** As victims of the demon's energy, the people who engage in lust with him also come to believe that everything is empty **and deny cause and effect.** They feel there is no need to believe in cause and effect.

K4 Giving the name and pointing out the harm.

Sutra:

"This is an essence that was created during an eclipse of the sun or moon. Having fallen on gold, jade, a rare fungus, a unicorn, a phoenix, a tortoise, or a crane, the essence endowed it with life, so that it did not die for thousands or tens of thousands of years and eventually became a spirit. It was then born into this land and in its old age has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person. But when it tires of doing so, it will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.

Commentary:

What is this? **This is an essence that was created during an eclipse of the sun or moon.** When there is an interaction between the sun and moon, an eclipse of the sun and moon, an essence falls

to the ground. **Having fallen on gold, jade, a** certain kind of **rare fungus, a unicorn, a phoenix, a tortoise, or a crane, the essence endowed it with life, so that it did not die for thousands or tens of thousands of years and eventually became a spirit. It was then born into this land and in its old age has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person** who is cultivating samadhi.

But eventually, **when it tires of doing so, it will leave the other person's body.** It will cease to possess him. **Then both** the **teacher and** his **disciples will get in trouble with the law.** They will be restrained by the law.

[January 1983]

Venerable Master: You must use Dharma-selecting Vision and Wonderful Contemplative Wisdom to regard this kind of state. When you contemplate, don't get attached and think, "I'm contemplating." Wonderful Contemplative Wisdom functions like a mirror; it's similar to the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom. However, while the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom reveals the actual appearance of all dharmas effortlessly, Wonderful Contemplative Wisdom requires the power of contemplation in order to be clearly aware. If you can maintain an objective point of view, then you won't be ensnared by such improper views. If you recognize the state, then you won't be turned by it.

Disciple: I have a question. Monkey (in the book *Journey to the West*) was born from a rock. How did that rock give birth to a monkey? Can such phenomena occur after a rock has been exposed to the essence of the sun and moon over several tens of thousands of years? Is Monkey's case the same as that described in the Sutra? That is, there is an essential energy created during an eclipse of the sun and the moon, and it is absorbed by such things as gold, jade, a rare fungus, a unicorn, a phoenix, a tortoise, or a crane, transforming them into demons. From reading the book, it seems to me that Monkey had a few good roots. He knew that transmigration entailed a lot of suffering, and so after eight hundred years, he

started on a quest for the Way. He mastered various spiritual arts and later became a Dharma-protector in Buddhism.

Monkey was an example of a good being, but here the text is talking about spirits, sprites, ghosts, and monsters who turn into demons in their old age. Under what conditions do they turn into demons when they get old? It seems that these demons are like bandits because they do evil. Is it the case that some turn into demons while others don't, because some are good and others aren't?

Venerable Master: Monkey was only a demon, and there are many other cases which are similar. Monkey probably ran into trouble as he was cultivating at the level of the thinking skandha, and so as a result, he turned into a monkey that could ascend to the heavens and burrow into the earth. He is exactly what the *Shurangama Sutra* calls "a representative of the demons." As for other demons, when they are fired of being demons, of course they will also take refuge in the Triple Jewel. With a single thought of reflecting within and awakening, they can become disciples of the Buddha. Before they awaken, they are still demons. The older demons get, the greater their spiritual powers become. The young ones aren't that strong and their spiritual powers aren't that great. The older ones have inconceivable strength and spiritual powers, which is why they are called demons. Demons are even more powerful than ghosts. The Chinese have the term "demonic ghost" because ghosts can turn into demons.

Have you heard about the "as-you-wish demon woman"? She had been a ghost in the Zhou Dynasty, but because she didn't follow the rules, she was struck by lightning. However, the lightning didn't destroy her completely, and she pulled herself back together with a concentrated effort. Then she cultivated and became a demon who went around taking people's lives, because she wanted to increase her own power and the power of her retinue. Each time she caused a person's death, the other demons would congratulate her: "You're really powerful!" It's similar to how other officials act toward an

official who has just been promoted. A demon’s power increases with the number of people it kills, until even ghosts have to follow its orders.

Later, when the as-you-wish demon woman met me, she took refuge with the Triple Jewel. Thus she was a demon who took refuge with the Buddha. Everything in this world is wondrous and inconceivable. This Sutra describes only a small portion. If we were to go into detail, each skandha has myriads of different kinds of demons. The Sutra mentions one kind to give people a general idea, so that they know to avoid thoughts of greed and craving. If you have no desire, you need not fear any demon whatsoever. If you are devoid of greed or desire, no demon can trouble you. Demons will come in only when they see that you’ve opened yourself up to them. If you always keep the doors closed, they won’t come in.

Demons get born in the heavens because they have cultivated many blessings. The Sutras talk about demons from the heavens, but you shouldn’t think they are only in the heavens. They can go to the heavens, but they are not always there. Demons in the human realm that are endowed with spiritual powers can also be considered demons from the heavens. If the demons in the heavens need them to go there to cheer them on in battle and to increase their power, they can go at any time. Although they are born in the heavens, they still have desires and huge tempers and are incredibly stubborn. It’s just because of their belligerent character that they become demons. If they weren’t so aggressive and hot-tempered, then they would join the Buddhas’ retinue. Those with bad tempers and heavy ignorance join the demons’ retinue.

As for what kind of retribution they will receive in the future, that’s a very distant question that cannot be answered. If they encounter someone with great spiritual powers but are rather resistant to being taught and transformed, they may be pulverized into nothingness. Even if they aren’t pulverized, if they do a lot of evil and fail to reform, if they still turn away from enlightenment to unite with the worldly dust and continue to be confused, then they

will have to undergo retribution and great suffering. They may fall among the animals and become foxes or weasels. It is the spirits of demons that cause them to turn into such creatures. They may become snakes or rats, or various other strange animals. These are all transformations of beings endowed with malicious demonic energy. Pierce beasts such as tigers are so powerful because they are aided by a bit of demonic power.

K5 Instructions to be aware and not become confused.

Sutra:

"You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.

Commentary:

You should be aware of this well **in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration** of the demon king. **If you are confused and do not understand,** if you do not wake up, **you will fall into the Relentless Hells.**

J10 Greed for immortality.
K1 Samadhi leads to craving and seeking.

Sutra:

"Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samadhi, his mind craves long life, so he toils at investigating its subtleties as he greedily seeks for immortality. He wishes to cast aside the birth and death of the body, and suddenly he hopes to end the birth and death of thoughts as well, so that he can abide forever in a subtle form.

Commentary:

Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling skandha is gone, now that the skandha of feeling has become empty, dear, and subtle, **this good person** who is

cultivating samadhi **is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within** that perfect, subtle **samadhi,** a change suddenly occurs. What is it? **His mind craves long life.** All of a sudden he thinks, "It would be most wonderful to live forever and not have to die." **So he toils at investigating its subtleties.** He painstakingly searches into its most esoteric and subtle aspects **as he greedily seeks for immortality.** He wants to live forever and never grow old.

He wishes to cast aside and renounce **the birth and death of the body**, literally "share-and-section birth and death." This refers to each individual's birth and death. Each person has a share, and each person has a section. What is meant by "share"? You have a body, and I have a body, too. You are a person, and I am also a person. You have your share, and I have my share. What about "section"? It is the life span, the interval from birth to death. "Section" can also refer to the physical stature – from head to toe.

And he **suddenly hopes to end the birth and death of thoughts as well.** Ordinary people undergo the physical birth and death of the body. A fourth stage Arhat has ended that kind of birth and death, but still has to undergo the birth and death of thoughts [literally "change birth and death"]. This refers to the continual passage of thoughts – the ever-changing thought process in which one thought is produced and another perishes in an endless flow. When he no longer undergoes physical birth and death, he suddenly hopes to end the birth and death of thoughts as well, **so he can abide forever in a subtle form,** a very refined and attentuated form. To abide forever means to obtain eternal life.

K2 A demon dispatches a deviant spirit to possess a person.

Sutra:

"At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.

Commentary:

Right when he entertains a thought of greed for long life, **at that time a demon** king **from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been** watching and **waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person.** The demon king sends one of its followers to possess a person **and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma** for the cultivator.

K3 The demon's words and deeds that mislead others.

Sutra:

"This person, unaware that he is possessed by a demon, claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks long life, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma. He is fond of saying that he can go places and come back without hindrance, perhaps traveling ten thousand miles and returning in the twinkling of an eye. He can also bring things back from wherever he goes. Or he may tell someone to walk from one end of the room to the other, a distance of just a few paces. Then even if the person walked fast for years, he could not reach the wall. Therefore people believe in the possessed person and mistake him for a Buddha.

Commentary:

Since **this person**'s mind is totally controlled by the demon from the heavens, he himself is **unaware that he is possessed by a demon**. He **claims** that **he has reached** the wondrous fruition of **unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks long life, he arranges a** Dharma-seat **and speaks the Dharma.**

He is fond of saying that he can go places and come back without hindrance. What does this demon like to say? He says, "In this very moment I can go some place a thousand or even ten thousand miles away, and return in the same moment. I can go to Japan without taking a plane, buy merchandise and bring it back with me. If you don't believe it, I'll give you a demonstration." He

is always showing off his spiritual powers. He wants people to see the inconceivable feats he can perform. He says, "I can go and come freely, in no time at all, **perhaps traveling ten thousand miles and returning in the twinkling of an eye.** I can go and return in the time it takes you to inhale and exhale."

Not only that, **he can also bring things back from wherever he goes.** He can buy things and bring them back. "You don't believe me?" he'll say. "See this item? It came from such and such a company in Japan – their exclusive model, only available for purchase on site." Then he shows them a radio or a tape recorder of Japanese make, which has not passed through customs or been imported, and which actually was manufactured by the company in Japan.

Or he may tell someone to walk from one end of the room to the other, a distance of just a few, maybe seven or eight, **paces. Then even if the person walked fast for years, he could not reach the wall.** He couldn't cover that small floor-space at a dead run even in a year's time. Seeing such displays, **therefore people believe in the possessed person and mistake him for a Buddha.** They think, "Oh! This is a Buddha coming to teat us the Dharma."

Sutra:

"He often says, 'All beings in the ten directions are my children. I gave birth to all Buddhas. I created the world. I am the original Buddha. I created this world naturally, not due to cultivation.'

Commentary:

He often says, "You know, **all beings in the ten directions are my children. I gave birth to all Buddhas.** Do you know whose sons the Buddhas are? They are my sons." He shamelessly boasts that he gave birth to all Buddhas. "**I created the world. I am the original Buddha.** I was the first Buddha. There weren't any Buddhas before me. **I created this world naturally, not due to cultivation.** I created this world spontaneously. And I was already

a Buddha when I came into the world. I didn't have to cultivate to become a Buddha."

K4 Giving the name and pointing out the harm.

Sutra:

"This may be a Chamunda sent from the retinue of the demon in the Heaven of Sovereignty, or a youthful pishacha from the Heaven of the Four Kings that has not yet brought forth the resolve. It takes advantage of the person's luminous clarity and devours his essence and energy. Or perhaps without having to rely on a teacher, the cultivator personally sees a being that tells him, 'I am a Vajra Spirit who has come to give you long life.' Or the being transforms itself into a beautiful woman and engages him in frenzied lust, so that within a year his vitality is exhausted. He talks to himself; and to anyone listening he sounds like a goblin. The people around him do not realize what is happening. In most cases such a person will get in trouble with the law. But before he is punished, he will die from depletion. The demon disturbs and confuses the person to the point of death.

Commentary:

This may be a Chamunda sent from the retinue of the demon in the Heaven of Sovereignty. Chamunda is a Sanskrit word that means "slave ghost," a ghost that does the work of a slave. It also means "jealous ghost" because it is always jealous of anything good that anyone else has. It tries to thwart people who want to study the Buddhadharma. If someone wants to be good, it drags him in a bad direction. It's a bad ghost. The demon in the Heaven of Sovereignty sends this kind of ghost to disturb the cultivator of samadhi. **Or** it may send **a youthful pishacha from the Heaven of the Four Kings.** Pishacha ghosts specialize in devouring essence. They eat the essence of various grains and plants and of humans as well. When men and women engage in sexual conduct a kind of essence flows forth, and that's what they eat. Whenever people engage in sexual conduct, there are lots of

ghosts waiting on the sidelines to eat the essence. It’s very dangerous.

This is a pishacha ghost **that has not yet brought forth the resolve. It takes advantage of the person’s luminous clarity and devours his essence.** Those who have not brought forth the resolve, such as the youthful pishacha and others, crave the cultivator’s bright clarity and his soul. They consume his essence, but he remains unaware of it.

Or perhaps without having to rely on a teacher, the cultivator personally sees a being that tells him, “I am a Vajra-wielding Dharma-protecting **Spirit who has come to give you long life.** Now I’ve come to give you longevity. You’ll be able to live a long time.” **Or** after saying that, **the being transforms itself into a beautiful woman and engages him in frenzied lust.** “Frenzied” means that they engage in this activity of lust over and over again, nonstop, **so that within a year his vitality is exhausted.** Under the strain, his vitality is depleted before a year is up. His essence, energy, and spirit all “dry up,” because this is too excessive. The key word here is “frenzied.” It’s not describing any ordinary occurrence. It’s not referring to the usual manner in which such activities are performed. It’s certain that the beautiful woman says, “The more you indulge in lust, the longer your life will be. You will attain long life.” In his greed for long life, he fails to realize his life is getting shorter by the minute. He’s totally spent before a year is up.

At that time **he talks to himself**. Actually he’s not talking to himself, he’s conversing with the demon. **And** while he’s doing so, **to anyone listening he sounds like a goblin**. He’s conversing with the demon, but the people around him don’t see it. I’ve encountered this kind of demon before.

I once met a man who was visited by a woman every night. She didn’t come to him in the daytime, but every evening as soon as she came, everyone in the household could hear the clack-clack of a woman’s high heels on the floor boards. Although they could hear

the sound, they could not see her. Whenever the woman came, the man would strip, hop in bed, and have at it, not caring whether anyone was around or not. That was an instance of this type of ghost. Later on, a shaman in the area went to his home to exorcise the ghost. That night, when the demon came, she conversed with the shaman.

"Fine," she said. "You want to cure this man? All right, from today on he'll be fine. But from this point, I'm going to start coming to your household. We'll have a little contest of dharmas." After that, she actually went to the shaman's home, and his older brother engaged in this sort of improper activity from morning to night with the demon. I'll tell you, this demon is really powerful.

The people around him do not realize what is happening. They are not aware of this situation. **In most cases such a person will get in trouble with the law,** and his activities will be curtailed by the law. **But before he is punished,** before he is brought to trial, **he will die from depletion.** While still in prison, he dies from the total depletion of his essence, energy, and spirit. **The demon disturbs and confuses the person to the point of death.** The demon destroys the person's samadhi-power to the extent that he perishes.

[January 1983]

When I was young, I liked to fight with demons. I fought with them until all the demon armies in the universe wanted to gang up on me. I nearly lost my life on many occasions. Because of this, later on, no matter how much I have wished to fight with demons again, I haven't dared to use any dharma against them. Many demons come to bully me, but I always practice forbearance and don't offer any opposition. I gather them in and influence them with kindness and compassion instead of subduing them with the Dharma of Subduing.

I remember that at the Virtue Society in Manchuria, the dean of the training school was called Xu Guilan. There were fifty or sixty students in the Virtue Society, and one of them became possessed

by a demon. Xu Guilan, thinking that she had some authority as the dean of the training school, tried to get rid of the demon. She spat a mouthful of cold water at the possessed girl, but the demon didn't leave.

It said, "Okay, you want to get rid of me? Then I'll possess you instead, and see what you do about that!"

Thereupon, the possessed girl got better, and Xu Guilan herself was possessed by the demon. Earlier, Guo Hong said he had used this method of reciting a mantra and then spitting on the possessed person, and the person had run off. Probably the demon who possessed him didn't have enough power, and so it left. But the demon that possessed Xu Guilan wasn't afraid of being spat on with cold water, and it didn't go away. Then Xu Guilan started acting demonic. She could no longer live at the Virtue Society and had to move back home. The demon came to disturb her every day at her home, throwing her family into a turmoil.

What demon was this? It was a gibbon spirit a very large one. When it came, it engaged in sexual intercourse with Xu Guilan. It would possess her body and torture her. Sometimes it would confuse her to the point that she would utter how much she loved it, and so on. Then they would have sex, and after it was over, Xu Guilan would be bleeding from her eyes, ears, nostrils, and mouth. The gibbon spirit sucked away all her energy and essence, leaving her paralyzed and near death.

The Virtue Society sent someone to see our monastery's abbot who was known throughout Manchuria as the Filial Son Wang. They had heard that he had great virtue and could subdue the demon, so they sought him out. However, the Abbot would always ask me to take care of such matters. He never dealt with them himself, but always sent me to resolve whatever problems there were. This happened many times, such as when the family of Gao Defu in Danangou Village was in trouble.

This time the Abbot also asked me to go, and so I went. When they informed the gibbon spirit of my coming, guess what it said?

"Ah! You wasted your efforts asking him to come. It won't work. Even if you asked Ji Gong (the "Living Buddha") to come, it wouldn't scare me."

It was not afraid of anything. When I went there, the gibbon spirit came, and we had a real fight! After two days of nonstop fighting, I finally subdued it. The woman recovered. I have been through many experiences such as this.

I'm not willing to interfere in other people's business anymore. For example, although I see that a certain person has an eagle spirit on her, and it is causing her head to shake involuntarily, I'm not going to do anything about it. I act as if I didn't see it. Why? Because I'm cultivating forbearance! Even if someone were to defecate on my head, I would bear it and not get angry. My motto now is that I will not contend with anyone. Guo Hong, you'd better be careful not to stir up trouble in the future. You must have a few good roots, or else that demon would easily have possessed you. This is no laughing matter.

K5 Instructions to be aware and not become confused.

Sutra:

"You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.

Commentary:

Ananda, **you should be aware of this in advance,** understand the principle involved, **and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration.** If you are aware of the demonic state, you won't fall into the demon's trap. You won't end up in the retinue of demons. But **if you are confused and do not understand,** there will be no politeness involved. It's certain **you will fall into the Relentless Hells.** You will not be shown the slightest favor.

I3 The Buddha exhorts those in the dharma-ending age.
J1 False boasting of accomplishment to sagely fruition.

Sutra:

“Ananda, you should know that in the Dharma-ending Age, these ten kinds of demons may leave the home-life to cultivate the Way within my Dharma. They may possess other people, or they may manifest themselves in various forms. All of them will claim that they have already accomplished Proper and Pervasive Knowledge and Awareness.

Commentary:

Ananda, you should know that, especially **in the Dharma-ending Age, these ten kinds of demons,** the ones that appear in the ten demonic states associated with the thinking skandha, **may leave the home-life to cultivate the Way within my** Buddhadharma. **They may possess other people.** The demon kings may possess other people, **or they may manifest themselves in various forms.** They may display their spiritual powers as demon kings and manifest all kinds of forms. They may appear as Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Arhats, or gods. Demon kings can manifest in any kind of body. **All of them will claim that they have already accomplished Proper and Pervasive Knowledge and Awareness.** “Proper and Pervasive Knowledge” refers to the Buddha, who has both proper knowledge and pervasive knowledge. “Proper knowledge” means knowing that “the mind produces the myriad dharmas.” “Pervasive knowledge” means knowing that “the myriad dharmas are the mind itself.” When someone has genuine proper and pervasive knowledge and views, he becomes a Buddha, One of Proper and Pervasive Knowledge. However, demons pretend to be Buddhas and claim to have attained proper and pervasive knowledge.

When Shakyamuni Buddha was about to enter Nirvana, he summoned the demon king and commanded him, “You should abide by the rules. Follow the rules from now on. Don’t violate them.”

The demon king replied, “So you want me to follow your rules? Fine. During the ending age of your Dharma, I will wear your garments, eat your food, and defecate in your alms bowl.” His meaning was that he would destroy the Dharma from within.

When the Buddha heard that he was worried. He wept and said, “There’s really nothing I can do about you. Your method is the most poisonous, the most destructive.”

There is the saying: “The parasites on the lion’s body eat the lion’s flesh.” This means that in the Dharma-ending Age, the demons are strong and the Dharma is weak. There are a lot of demon kings. Therefore, cultivators must be very careful. What are demon kings like? In general, they are different from ordinary people. They have a demonic energy about them. There is something unusual about them, which reveals that they are demon kings.

[January 1983]

The Dharma-ending Age is a time when the Dharma is weak and demons are strong. The Song of Enlightenment by Great Master Yongjia says very clearly:

> *Alas! In the evil time of the Dharma-ending Age,*
> *Living beings have few blessings;*
> *it is difficult to train them. Far indeed from the Sages of the past,*
> *their deviant views are deep.*
> *Demons are strong, the Dharma is weak;*
> *many are the wrongs and injuries.*
> *Hearing of the door of the Tathagata’s Sudden Teaching,*
> *They regret not destroying it as they would smash a tile.*

“Alas” expresses a regretful sighing about the Dharma-ending Age. The evil time means this time is very evil and vile. All the monsters are appearing in the world.

The computer is one of the biggest monsters, and television is a small monster. The small monster helps the big one out and the big monster wants to devour all the people. It wants to take people's jobs away. This is a very evil age. Living beings have no blessings. They are tense and nervous from morning to night, and people suffer from diseases of the heart, liver, lungs, spleen, and kidneys. Such diseases strike people because they are infected with deviant energy. They have been poisoned too deeply.

You think it's nice to watch television, to talk on the phone, to listen to the radio, and to play with the computer, but you don't realize the harm that these things do to your heart, liver, spleen, lungs, and kidneys. They cause people to act inhuman and ghosts to act unlike ghosts. That's a sign that the world is starting to go bad. We have been born in a time when living beings have no blessings and are difficult to teach. You may advise them not to watch television or listen to the radio, but they insist on doing those things. Tell them not to listen to music, but they listen on the sly. It's not easy to teach the upside down living beings in this terrible age.

"Far indeed from the Sages of the past." They are very far from the Buddhas. "Their deviant views are deep." Everyone has deviant knowledge and deviant views; no one has proper knowledge and proper views. Their deviant views are too deep. "Demons are strong, the Dharma is weak." In this age the demons prosper and the Dharma is very feeble. "Many are the wrongs and injuries." You hurt me, and I hurt you. We hurt each other out of resentment. "Hearing of the door of the Tathagata's Sudden Teaching." If they hear of the Buddha's Proper Dharma Eye Treasury, the Dharma-door of the Sudden Teaching, "they regret not destroying it as they would smash a tile." They regret not being able to wreck it immediately, as they would smash a tile to bits. That's how much they hate the Buddhadharma. This is the way we are now.

Therefore, we Buddhists who live at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas should not keep radios, televisions, or musical records in

our homes; we should get rid of these. No matter how busy we are, we should attend the morning and evening ceremonies and the Sutra recitations. We should not be absent from these activities. If you are a layperson and you cannot make it to the temple, you may do the morning and evening ceremonies, recite Sutras, and investigate the Buddhadharma at home. Don't spend your spare time watching television or listening to the radio, being no different from people of the outside world.

The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is different from the outside world, and we should not let ourselves be influenced by the common crowd. All of you at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas should devote your attention to the Buddhadharma and to studying and practicing the principles in the Buddhist Sutras. If you memorize the *Shurangama Sutra*, that will make me extremely happy. Even at home, you should read and recite the *Shurangama Sutra*, the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, and the *Avatamsaka Sutra*. What's the point of coming to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas if you don't understand the Buddhadharma at all? It's meaningless. If you don't understand anything and you have no idea what people are talking about during discussions, then your being here is too pitiful.

J2 They use lust in their teaching.

Sutra:

"They praise lust and break the Buddha's moral precepts. The evil demonic teachers and their demonic disciples that I just discussed transmit their teaching through licentious activity. Such deviant spirits take over cultivators' minds, and after as few as nine lives or as many as a hundred generations, they turn true practitioners entirely into followers of demons.

Commentary:

They praise lust. How can one tell if someone is a demon? Demons do not praise proper methods of practice. They praise lust and openly advocate sex. And they break the Buddha's moral

precepts. They say, “The Buddha’s precepts are useless. Don’t keep them. The Buddha’s precepts were for adherents of the Small Vehicle to practice. We are Great Vehicle Bodhisattvas, Great Vehicle Buddhas. Since we have already become Buddhas, we don’t need to hold the precepts.” **The evil demonic teachers** of Dharma **and their demonic disciples,** the disciples of the demon kings, **that I just discussed transmit their teaching through licentious activity.** They practice lust with each other and praise it, saying, “It is the finest and most wonderful Dharma door. The principle of true emptiness and wonderful existence lies right within this.” **Such deviant spirits,** that is, those who extol lust, **take over cultivators’ minds.** Because the cultivators’ minds are confused by the deviant demons who have possessed them, they crave sex and openly advocate lust. It’s all because the demons have taken over their minds.

And after as few as nine lives or as many as a hundred generations, they turn true practitioners entirely into followers of demons. At the minimum, it takes nine lives. What does one “life” mean? Is it the period from a person’s birth until his death? No. Rather, it refers to a period of a hundred years. Therefore nine lives is nine hundred years. At the most, it takes over a hundred generations. One gene-ration represents thirty years, and so a hundred generations is three thousand years. It takes a minimum of nine lives to turn a true cultivator completely into a member of the demon’s retinue.

At the other extreme, it might take as long as a hundred generations from the time the demon confuses him until he becomes part of the demon’s retinue. Although he has been confused, he still has to pass through several more lives. Only after a long time does he officially join the demon’s retinue. Before that time, his nature is not totally demonic. Do you know what demons are transformed from? Demons were originally people. A person who is not upright may become a demon, but it doesn’t happen that fast. The demon king hounds him, follows him, and keeps

confusing him. The process takes from as short a time as nine lives to as long as a hundred generations

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J3 They are beguiled by demons and fall into the hells.

Sutra:

"When their lives are over, they are bound to end up as one of the demonic hordes. They will lose their proper and pervasive knowledge and fall into the Relentless Hells.

Commentary:

When their lives are over, when the allotted time has passed, anywhere from nine lives to a hundred generations, and the practitioners die, **they are bound to end up as one of the demonic hordes.** They cannot become demon kings, since there is only one king. There are not that many demon kings. They can only become run-of-the-mill demons, common citizens of the demon populace. **They will lose their proper and pervasive knowledge.** They will lose proper knowledge and views and will have only wrong knowledge and views; and they will follow along in the deeds done by the demon king. **And** eventually they will **fall into the Relentless Hells.** After they use up their blessings as demons, their lives will end and they will fall into the hells.

J4 Exhortation to compassionately rescue them to repay kindness.

Sutra:

"You need not enter Nirvana yet. Although you are completing your attainment to the level beyond study, hold nonetheless to your vows to enter the Dharma-ending Age. Bring forth great compassion to rescue and take across living beings who have proper minds and deep faith. Do not let them become possessed by demons. Help them instead to attain proper knowledge and views. I have already rescued you from birth and death. By venerating the Buddha's words, you will be repaying the Buddha's kindness.

Commentary:

"Ananda, **you need not enter Nirvana yet.** Don't enter Nirvana yet. Stay here in the world and teach and transform living beings on my behalf. **Although you are completing your attainment to the level beyond study, hold nonetheless to your vows to enter the Dharma-ending Age.** For all practical purposes, you have already attained the state beyond study." (At this point Ananda has realized the second fruition of Arhatship, but has not yet actually attained the level beyond study. However, the path of cultivation to reach that accomplishment is clear to him, so he can be considered as having attained that level.) The Buddha says, "You should keep your compassionate vows. When the Proper Dharma is gone and the Dharma Image Age has passed, the Dharma-ending Age will come. At that time bring forth great compassion to rescue and take across living beings who have proper minds and deep faith. Ananda, you should bring forth a mind of great kindness and compassion and save living beings whose minds are proper in the Dharma-ending Age."

"**Do not let them become possessed by demons.** Rescue living beings and cause them to have deep faith in you, so that they will not be confused by the demon kings. Do not allow the demon kings to have their way with people. **Help them,** the living beings in the Dharma-ending Age, **instead to** be on guard and to **attain proper knowledge and views.**" That means you and me, living beings right now, not anyone else. You should urge yourself on. Keep a proper attitude and outlook.

Shakyamuni Buddha says, "Ananda, **I have already rescued you from birth and death.** You have already ended birth and death. You are already a second-stage Arhat, and you understand the way to reach the fourth stage of Arhatship, so for all practical purposes we can say that your birth and death are now ended. **By venerating the Buddha's words, you will be repaying the Buddha's kindness.** Now listen to the Buddha's instruction; do what the Buddha tells you and don't forget it. By honoring and

obeying the Buddha, you are repaying the Buddha's deep kindness."

What does it mean to repay the Buddha's kindness? If we listen to the Buddha's instructions, we are repaying the Buddha's kindness. If we want to repay the Buddha's kindness, we must obey the Buddha. If Ananda wants to repay the Buddha's kindness, Ananda should listen to the Buddha. If we want to repay the Buddha's kindness, we should also listen to the Buddha. We should listen to Shakyamuni Buddha and to the Dharma Masters when they explain the Sutras and the principles. That's why at the very start I said you all should listen to the Buddha. I'm not a Buddha; I should also listen to the Buddha. No matter what, we shouldn't ignore the Buddha's advice.

I4 Conclusion on the harm, and command to offer protection.
J1 Showing how the states come about from interaction.

Sutra:

"Ananda, all ten of these states may occur in dhyana as one's mental effort interacts with the thinking skandha.

Commentary:

Ananda, all ten of these states which have just been explained **may occur in** the still contemplation of **dhyana** when you have applied enough effort to reach that level. Where do those states come from? They can happen **as one's mental effort interacts with the thinking skandha**. They are changes that occur in the thinking skandha as a result of pressure applied in cultivation. When you are cultivating with maximum effort, such states will manifest. But when they manifest, don't "mistake a thief for your own son"; don't be confused by those states. When you meditate, your mental effort interacts with the thinking skandha. They engage in battle. It's like a war. If your samadhi power is victorious, then the thinking skandha will be conquered. But if the thinking skandha wins out and your skill in samadhi fizzles, you will be caught in a demonic state, and then these kinds of things will happen.

J2 Confusion will bring harm.

Sutra:

“Dull and confused living beings do not evaluate themselves. Encountering such situations, in their confusion they fail to recognize them and say that they have become sages, thereby uttering a great lie. They will fall into the Relentless Hells.

Commentary:

Dull and confused living beings do not evaluate themselves. Living beings are always getting attached to things. They are obstinate and inflexible, stupid and with-out wisdom. They do not take proper stock of themselves. **Encountering such situations,** such demonic states, **in their confusion they fail to recognize them.** The most important thing is that if you can recognize states, then you won’t be turned by them. If you are clear about them, you will not be confused. If you don’t understand, then you will be confused. Confusion is basically a lack of recognition. And what happens when people fail to recognize states?

They say that they have become sages. They say things like, “Do you know about me? I’ve become a Buddha already. And I’ll tell you, it was really easy for me. It was cheaper than buying a couple pieces of tofu.” That’s really too easy, isn’t it? Such people say that they are Buddhas, that they have realized the Way, that they are enlightened, that they have penetrated their meditation topic, and that they’ve got it all figured out.

For example, someone who came here today was of the same type as the “American Sixth Patriarch” who came a few days ago. He didn’t bow to the Buddhas or stupas. The Sutra describes the possessed person as not bowing in temples or to shrines. He didn’t bow to the Buddha or listen to the Dharma. He just ate lunch and left. The reason he left was that his demon dragged him away. He was so filled with demonic energy that he felt too uncomfortable to stay for even one minute more after eating his lunch. You should recognize what he was all about. His manner indicated that he

thought he was already a Buddha, so he didn't need to bow to the Buddha.

...thereby uttering a great lie. They will fall into the Relentless Hells. He is bound to fall into the Relentless Hells in the future. Don't look only at the short term. It may take as little as nine lives, or it may take up to a hundred generations. He didn't listen to the Buddhadharma because of the demonic energy that had taken over him. Even if he wanted to listen, his entire body felt too uneasy, so he couldn't sit or stand still. I've told you about this before, and you should all pay attention. After this, whenever you go to a temple or Buddha hall, you must respect the temple rules. Do what the other people are doing. Don't stand when everyone else is bowing to the Buddha. That looks very bad. Anyone who acts like that won't be able to study the Buddhadharma no matter where he goes. When you study the Buddhadharma, you must be receptive, humble, and sincere.

J3 Command to offer protection.

Sutra:

"In the Dharma-ending Age, after my Nirvana, all of you should pass on the Tathagata's teachings, so that all living beings can awaken to their meaning. Do not let the demons of the heavens have their way. Offer protection so that all can realize the unsurpassed Way.

Commentary:

In the Dharma-ending Age, after my Nirvana, all of you should pass on the Tathagata's teachings. "All of you" refers to Ananda and all the great Bodhisattvas, great Arhats, and great Bhikshus in the assembly, as well as to the great Elders. Here the Buddha is exhorting them, "You must continue the transmission of the Tathagata's teachings down to the Dharma-ending Age, **so that all living beings can awaken to their meaning,** and so they can understand the principles of the *Shurangama Sutra*. Tell them about the fifty kinds of skandha demons, about the demons of the

form, feeling, and thinking skandhas which I have explained for you. Be sure to propagate this teaching so everyone can hear it. **Do not let the demons of the heavens have their way. I**f you let the demons do as they please, then you are in for trouble. **Offer protection –** maintain and support the Buddhadharma **– so that all can realize the** fruition of the **unsurpassed Way**.

CHAPTER 5

The Formations Skandha

H4 The characteristics of the demons of the formations skandha.
I1 Overview of the beginning and end.
J1 In the beginning, one cultivates but has not yet broken through this region.
K1 Review of the ending of the previous thinking skandha.

Sutra:

"Ananda, when the good person who is cultivating samadhi has put an end to the thinking skandha, he is ordinarily free of dreaming and idle thinking, so he stays the same whether in wakefulness or in sleep. His mind is aware, clear, empty, and still, like a cloudless sky, devoid of any coarse sense-impressions. He contemplates everything in the world – the mountains, the rivers, and the earth – as reflections in a mirror, appearing without attachment and vanishing without any trace; they are simply received and reflected. He does away with all his old habits, and only the essential truth remains.

Commentary:

Ananda, when the good person… Which good person is being referred to here? The good person is the one who is developing the skill of directing the hearing inward to hear the inherent nature. He is cultivating the Great Shurangama Samadhi. And who exactly is that person? He is simply whoever cultivates. "The good person"

does not refer to any particular individual; it's not an exclusive title. If you cultivate, then it refers to you. If I cultivate, it refers to me. If he or she cultivates, it refers to him or her. Everyone has a share in it. That is, you have a share if you cultivate, but not if you don't. It's completely fair.

That good person is the one **who is cultivating samadhi**. Cultivation refers to diligently sitting in meditation, not to eating all day long. You should sit in meditation, listen to the Sutras, and study the Buddhadharma. What should you cultivate? Samadhi power. How do you cultivate samadhi power? Sit in meditation. Samadhi arises from precepts, so the first step is to hold the precepts. Once you take the precepts, you must hold the precepts and never indulge in sexual misconduct. Men and women should observe propriety, as Lord Guan Yu [a famous general in the Three Kingdoms Period of China] did. He was faithful to his wife all his life. He never drew near another woman. Do you see his ruddy face? It testifies to his magnanimous, proper energy. Now that you have taken the precepts, I want to tell you that you must remain faithful to your spouse. You may not get involved in extramarital affairs and go looking for partners everywhere. Don't break the rules. You should accord with propriety and be open and upright in your conduct; only then will you attain samadhi. After taking the precepts, you will develop samadhi. From samadhi, wisdom will develop.

How do people get possessed by demons? If you have a little samadhi and your wisdom is insufficient, you may encounter demonic obstacles. If your skill in samadhi is deep enough, you will be able to conquer the demons.

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If you want to have proper samadhi, holding the precepts is certainly a prerequisite. It sets the foundation. Once we have a firm foundation, we can erect pillars on top of it. The pillars represent samadhi, and the foundation represents precepts. We must strictly uphold the precepts. This is very, very important. If you don't set a

good foundation, then the pillars will not stand, and your samadhi will be deviant.

What is meant by wisdom? Once the pillars are erected and the walls are put in, the house can be built. what's the use of a house? It can be a place for people to bow to the Buddhas and to hear lectures on the Sutras. We can teach people to change their faults and renew themselves. That's the function of wisdom.

Precepts are the substance, samadhi is the appearance, and wisdom is the function. We should be very clear about this. If you lack precepts, then you won't have any samadhi. Without samadhi, you cannot develop wisdom. Likewise, if you don't set the foundation well, the pillars you erect will not be stable, the walls will cave in, and the house will collapse and be useless. Therefore, the three non-outflow studies of precepts, samadhi, and wisdom are all indispensable. We should pay close attention to this.

He **has put an end to the thinking skandha.** Among the five skandhas of form, feeling, thinking, formations, and consciousness, the thinking skandha is destroyed. In his mind's interaction with the thinking skandha, he has conquered it. Having broken through the thinking skandha, **he is ordinarily free of dreaming and idle thinking**. The state he has reached is not a state of not eating or not sleeping. In this state, one still sleeps and eats, but no longer dreams. Confucius once said,

"Alas, I'm getting decrepit. It's been so long since I saw the Duke of Zhou in a dream!"

This was the Duke who protected the King Wu in the Zhou Dynasty. Why didn't Confucius have any dreams? Probably it was because by that time in his life, Confucius had partially broken through the thinking skandha. However, since he was not aware of it, he wondered, "Hey! How come I don't dream anymore? Oh, I must be getting old." Confucius had some skill in cultivation, and it's likely that he had destroyed the thinking skandha without knowing it. He didn't understand, so he decided that he no longer

had dreams because he was old. Once the thinking skandha is destroyed, dreams are gone.

So he stays the same whether in wakefulness or in sleep. If you have read classical Chinese literature, you may know a story called The Warlord Defeats Duan at Yan which relates how a warlord named Zheng married a girl named Jiang. She gave birth to Lord Zhuang and Gong Shuduan. Lord Zhuang was called "Born Upon Waking" because his mother was asleep when she started to give birth to him, and when she woke up, he was born.

To that cultivator, the state of wakefulness is the same as the state of sleep. In other words, when he's asleep, it's as if he were awake. He can be like that because he is not upside-down and thus has no dream-thinking. When you have broken through the thinking skandha, you can leave upside-down dream-thinking far behind and ultimately attain the state of Nirvana. If you haven't broken through the thinking skandha, this upside-downness will not go away. You should pay attention to this point.

In our study of the Buddhadharma, the five skandhas discussed in the *Shurangama Sutra* are extremely important. Furthermore, you should know how to untie the six knots. If you do not understand these knots, then you will never be able to untie them and become free. If you can untie them, you will obtain freedom.

His mind is aware, clear, empty, and still. At this point he may be sleeping or awake, but for him, the two states are the same. what kind of state is this? The person actually sleeps very little. He's a light sleeper. He can replenish his energy just by closing his eyes for a while, unlike some people who sleep from dawn to dusk and from dusk to dawn. The reason they never seem to get enough sleep is because they have not broken through the thinking skandha. They tend to doze off a lot. when he breaks through the thinking skandha, he becomes alert and clear-minded. Waking and sleeping become the same for him. There is no difference. If you talk while he's sleeping, he will hear you. That's a subtle and wonderful state. Don't think you can scold him while he's asleep,

for he knows what you are saying. He just doesn't let you know that he knows. what a wonderful state that is! Some beings in the heavens neither eat nor sleep, and are always alert and wide-awake.

"His mind is aware, clear, empty and still," **like a cloudless sky**. There's a Chinese saying, "No clouds for ten thousand miles-just ten thousand miles of sky." In the clear sky, the bright sun shines for thousands of miles around. In that state, the cultivator's mind is **devoid of any coarse sense-impressions**. All the shadows of coarse sense-data that characterized his former state are gone.

He contemplates everything in the world – the mountains, the rivers, and the earth – as reflections in a mirror, appearing without attachment and vanishing without any trace. His perception of the world and everything in it is like a bright mirror which reflects things and is empty when the things are gone. They leave no traces. No matter what state comes along, the cultivator does not become attached to it. when the situation passes, nothing remains. when it's gone, it's simply gone. It is said, "The mind of the past cannot be grasped, the mind of the present cannot be grasped, and the mind of the future cannot be grasped." The three minds cannot be obtained. That's why there is no attachment when they come, and no trace left when they go. **They are simply received and reflected.**

He does away with all his old habits. He empties himself of all old habits, stinking habits, evil habits, and bad habits. Take a look at the bad habits people have. Some people like to say really foul things – that's a stinky habit. Some people say mean things – that's an evil habit Some people are generally arrogant and haughty. We have so many bad habits. But that cultivator has gotten rid of all those habits, **and only the essential truth remains**. The only thing left is the thought of essential truth, which is the eighth consciousness. At this point the first six consciousnesses and the seventh consciousness are all gone. Now only the eighth consciousness remains, and it must be transformed into the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom of the Buddha. He has now reached this stage, but has not

yet transformed it. That's what is meant by "only the essential truth remains.

K2 Introduction to the region of the formations skandha.

Sutra:

"From this point on, as the origin of production and destruction is exposed, he will completely see all the twelve categories of living beings in the ten directions. Although he has not fathomed the source of their individual lives, he will see that they share a common basis of life, which appears as a mirage – shimmering and fluctuating – and is the ultimate, pivotal point of the illusory sense faculties and sense objects. This is the region of the formations skandha.

Commentary:

From this point on, as the origin of production and destruction is exposed… This refers to the origin of birth and death, which lies in the subtle movements of the seventh and sixth consciousnesses. At this point, the thinking skandha has been destroyed, and the cultivator has reached the formations skandha. Therefore, as the origin is revealed, **he will completely see all the twelve categories of living beings in the ten directions.** He exhaustively understands each of the twelve categories, which include beings born from eggs up to beings not completely without thought.

Although he has not fathomed the source of their individual lives, he will see that they share a common basis of life, which appears as a mirage – shimmering and fluctuating. He does not completely understand how each individual came into being, but he does perceive the origin of all the twelve categories of beings. This origin appears to him like a mirage. Sometimes in the spring you may see what seems to be a body of water in the distance, but when you reach the spot there is no water. *Zhuang Zi* called this mirage a "wild horse," a poetic reference to the cloud of dust stirred up by a galloping horse. In the *Shurangama Sutra*, it's literally called

"solar flames." It refers to the vapor that rises from the earth in the springtime, forming a mirage. It's said that wherever these mirages appear, the geomantic properties are pretty good. Thus, whether the Buddhist Sutras read "solar flames" or "wild horse," the reference is to mirages. "Shimmering" means that there's a bit of light, but it's not clear. "Fluctuating" means that the state of disturbance is not very great.

And is the ultimate, pivotal point of the illusory sense faculties and sense objects. The six sense faculties are the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. These are all illusory, not real. In Chinese, "pivotal point" is expressed by characters for the pivot on which a Chinese door hangs and the place where the pivot is anchored so that the door can be opened and closed. Nowadays we use two metal hinges, but in ancient China the doors were hung on pivots that were anchored in holes. **This** situation **is** known as **the region of the formations skandha.**

J2 Ultimately it breaks up and reveals its false source.

Sutra:

"Once the basic nature of this shimmering fluctuation returns to its original clarity, his habits will cease, like waves subsiding to become clear, calm water. This is the end of the formations skandha. This person will then be able to transcend the turbidity of living beings. Contemplating the cause of the formations skandha, one sees that subtle and hidden false thoughts are its source.

Commentary:

Once the basic nature of this shimmering fluctuation returns to its original clarity, his habits will cease, like waves subsiding to become clear, calm water. The nature of this small amount of light is such that after a long while, it will revert to its original stillness and clarity. Once it settles and becomes clear, the original, pure nature appears. when that happens, those kinds of habits will disappear like subsiding waves.

The thinking skandha is like a rapidly flowing torrent. The comparison was made earlier in the Sutra. Now the analogy is to waves, as in a swift current or a torrent. when the waves subside, the water clears and settles. **This is the end of the formations skandha.** The thinking skandha is like a gushing torrent, whereas the formations skandha is like ripples on the water. when only the consciousness skandha remains, there are no more waves in the clear, settled water. This is called "the end of the formations skandha."

This person will then be able to transcend the state of the turbidity of living beings. Contemplating the cause of the formations skandha, one sees that subtle and hidden false thoughts are its source. when you reach this point you still have false thinking, but it is not so apparent. It is hidden and obscured, not easy to detect at all. These extremely subtle false thoughts are the source of the formations skandha.

I2 The ten speculations therein.
J1 Two theories on the absence of cause.
K1 Describes the source and shows the error.

Sutra:

"Ananda, you should know that when the good person has obtained proper knowledge in his practice of shamatha, his mind is unmoving, clear, and proper, and it cannot be disturbed by the ten kinds of demons from the heavens. He is now able to intently and thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings. As the origin of each category becomes apparent, he can contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and pervasive fluctuation. But if he begins to speculate on that pervasive source, he could fall into error with two theories of the absence of cause.

Commentary:

Ananda, you should know that when the good person has obtained proper knowledge in his practice of the still reflection of **shamatha** or concentration, **his mind is unmoving, clear, and**

proper. Within samadhi, his mind becomes bright and concentrated, **and it cannot be disturbed by the ten kinds of demons from the heavens.** They can't disturb the cultivator. **He is now able to** have the chance to **intently and thoroughly investigate** samadhi and fathom **the origin of all** twelve **categories of beings**.

As the origin of each category becomes apparent, as he exposes the source of each category, **he can contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and pervasive fluctuation.** He contemplates this elusive state which is difficult to detect The pervasive fluctuation is a subtle movement that occurs within the seventh consciousness. **But if he** suddenly initiates a change and **begins to speculate about that pervasive source –** the perfect inherent nature, **he could fall into error with two theories of the absence of cause.**

K2 Detailed explanation of their appearance.
L1 He sees no cause for the origin of life.
M1 He describes the measure of his vision.

Sutra:

"First perhaps this person sees no cause for the origin of life. Why? Since he has completely destroyed the mechanism of production, he can, by means of the eight hundred merits of the eye organ, see all beings in the swirling flow of karma during eighty thousand eons, dying in one place and being reborn in another as they undergo transmigration. But he cannot see beyond eighty thousand eons.

Commentary:

The **first** of the two theories of the nonexistence of cause is that **this person sees no cause for the origin of life.** He sees that, at the source of it all, there is no cause which makes a person a person. **Why? He has completely destroyed the mechanism of production.** That is, he has cut off the thinking skandha. The formations skandha is like ripples on the water. After he has broken through the thinking skandha, he has "destroyed the mechanism of production." The mechanism that produces false thoughts has been

destroyed, and he does no more false thinking. why did the text say earlier that a person has no more dreams after he breaks through the thinking skandha? It's because he has destroyed the mechanism that creates false thinking.

He can, by means of the eight hundred merits of the eye organ, see all beings in the swirling flow of karma during eighty thousand eons. Although each sense organ has a potential of twelve hundred merits, the eye organ does not function in total capacity and has only eight hundred merits. Once he breaks through the thinking skandha, he can see the events that occur within eighty thousand eons. He sees beings **dying in one place and being reborn in another as they undergo transmigration.** The flow of karma created by living beings in this world can be likened to a current or to the sea. He can see beings swirling in that flow over a period of eighty thousand great eons, dying in one place and being reborn in another, lime after lime. **But he cannot see** any of the events that occur **beyond eighty thousand eons.**

M2 He comes up with a wrong speculation.

Sutra:

"Therefore, he concludes that for the last eighty thousand eons living beings in the ten directions of this and other worlds have come into being without any cause.

Commentary:

Therefore, since he cannot see the events that occurred more than eighty thousand great eons ago, **he concludes that for the last eighty thousand eons living beings in the ten directions of this and other worlds have come into being without any cause.** They just come into being by themselves, without any cause or conditions. They are born spontaneously.

M3 He mistakes the principle and falls for an externalist teaching.

Sutra:

"Because of this speculation, he will lose proper and pervasive knowledge, fall into externalism, and become confused about the Bodhi nature.

Commentary:

Because of this speculation, this conjecture that goes off-track, **he will lose proper and pervasive knowledge, fall into externalism,** join an external sect, **and become confused about the Bodhi nature,** the nature of the Bodhi-mind.

L2 He sees no cause for the end of life.
M1 He describes the measure of his vision.

Sutra:

"Second, perhaps this person sees no cause for the end of life. And why? Since he perceives the origin of life, he believes that people are always born as people and birds are always born as birds; that crows have always been black and swans have always been white; that humans and gods have always stood upright and animals have always walked on four legs; that whiteness does not come from being washed and blackness does not come from being dyed; and that there have never been nor will there be any changes for eighty thousand eons.

Commentary:

What is the **second** view? **Perhaps this person sees no cause for the end of life.** The first is that he sees no cause for the beginning of things, and here he sees no cause for the end. **And why? Since he perceives the origin of life,** the beginning of all living beings, **he believes that people are always born as people and birds are always born as birds.** Believing that he has been enlightened and has attained great wisdom, he thinks he knows. what does he think he knows? He says, "People are people in life after life, and birds are birds in life after life."

Crows have always been black. They are black to begin with; they don't have to be dyed that color. **And swans have always been white.** They are white from birth. **Humans and gods have always stood upright.** Humans and celestial beings all walk erect. **And animals have always walked on four legs.** Animals walk horizontally, with their four legs on the ground. This is all fixed. **Their whiteness does not come from being washed, and their blackness does not come from being dyed.** For example, crows are black, but they weren't dyed black. Also, swans did not have to be washed to become white. **And there have never been nor will there be any changes for eighty thousand eons.**

[January 1983]

Disciple: Since the person is able to see events that happened within twenty thousand, forty thousand, and even eighty thousand great eons, why is he unable to see people being reborn in other paths as they undergo transmigration?

Venerable Master: That's an interesting question. You must realize that although the text says he can see for twenty thousand great eons, he is actually under the influence of a false state. One thought is equivalent to limitless eons, and limitless eons are just one thought. He feels it is twenty thousand eons, but it may not really be that long; he is still caught up in a false state. Controlled by false thinking, he experiences a totally unreal state in which he sees pigs being pigs and cows being cows for twenty thousand eons. Although he feels that it's that way, his perception is not correct. If it were really twenty thousand eons, then of course pigs would undergo transmigration and would not remain as pigs during all that time! The fact that he claims that they do shows that he is totally fake. Although he says that he can see for twenty thousand great eons, it's not necessarily such a long time. That's only his own feeling.

For instance, Mr. Wu from Taiwan said, "Oh, I feel that I was together with so-and-so in the Sixth Patriarch's Dharma Assembly during the Tang dynasty."

That's just the kind of state we are discussing. The very fact that he feels this to be the case indicates that it is not true; if it were true, there would have to be some evidence. And he shouldn't go around advertising himself. If what he said were true, how could he bear to leave so soon after being reunited with that person? Has he really put everything down? Why is he going back to Taiwan to attend to other business? He made that claim just to confuse people. Those people, unable to distinguish right from wrong, exclaim, "Incredible! He must be psychic – he knows that he was with this person back in the Tang dynasty." So what? if you know that but you don't cultivate, you'll still fall and become a ghost.

Therefore, you have to perceive things clearly; it takes genuine wisdom to know why a person speaks a certain way. Mr. Wu saw that so-and-so was quite influential at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas and at Gold Mountain Monastery, and he thought it would be advantageous to claim that he was associated with that person. That person silently acknowledged the claim, which was equivalent to saying, "Right, he and I really did study the Dharma together in the assembly of the Great Master, the Sixth Patriarch." Notice how that elevates his own status. It is just like when another person came to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas and talked about how we all supported him. These cases are very similar, but they used different methods to deceive people.

Pay close attention to this. As I said before, the false paves the way for the true. First there is the false, which makes people all muddled and confused. Later, some people who seek the truth set off in quest of the Proper Dharma. When people reach a dead-end, they begin to pursue the Proper Dharma. Therefore,

That which is contrary is the movement of the Way.
That which is weak is the function of the Way.
Purity is the source of the turbidity.
Movement is the foundation of stillness.

The Way contains opposites; when we study the Buddhadharma, we must have genuine Dharma-selecting Vision so that we can distinguish true dharmas, false dharmas, black dharmas, white dharmas, proper dharmas, and deviant dharmas. If you can recognize them, you'll be all right. If you're so muddled that you don't recognize what's true and what's false, if you jump to conclusions without analyzing things carefully, then you're in for trouble.

For that reason, we should constantly investigate the *Shurangama Sutra*. The couplet on the main entrance to our Way-place says, "The Avatamsaka Dharma Assembly and the Shurangama Platform." Since we are in the Shurangama Platform, we are now investigating the Fifty Skandha demons and afterwards we will study the Perfect Penetrations of the Twenty-five Sages. Then we can investigate the Four Clear, Unalterable Instructions on Purity. In this way, we will investigate the *Shurangama Sutra*, passage by passage, section by section, until we understand it clearly. Nowadays the followers of demons, goblins, ghosts, and freaks claim that the *Shurangama Sutra* is false. Hearing them, people lose their faith and say, "Oh, the *Shurangama Sutra* is false; no matter what you say, it's false."

We should believe in reason. If a person's words make sense, we should believe them. If they don't make sense, if they do not accord with the Proper Dharma and the precepts, then even if what they say is true, we should regard it as false. How can we distinguish the true from the false, the black from the white? Don't be so muddled that you take wrong knowledge and views as correct, and proper knowledge and views as incorrect. To do that would be to seriously invert right and wrong. You would lose your vision and become blind, because you wouldn't be able to tell black from white. People who hold to wrong knowledge and views undergo the retribution of having no eyes, because they have blinded others and led others astray. Pay close attention to this. The law of cause and effect is very serious; it is not off by a bit. From

my experience, I know that we cannot do even the slightest wrong deed, for if we do, we will soon have to undergo the retribution.

M2 He comes up with a wrong speculation.

Sutra:

"He says, 'As I now examine to the end of this life, I find the same holds true. In fact, I have never seen Bodhi, so how can there be such a thing as the attainment of Bodhi? You should now realize that there is no cause for the existence of any phenomena.'

Commentary:

This person is able to see the events that occur within eighty thousand great eons, so **he says, "As I now examine to the end of this life,** the life of this physical body, **I find the same holds true."** Just like the living beings that he perceives within eighty thousand great eons, his body also has no source from which it comes. He says, "**In fact, I have never seen Bodhi.** I have yet to see what Bodhi looks like, **so how can there be such a thing as the attainment of Bodhi?** I've looked throughout the eighty thousand great eons and haven't even caught a glimpse of Bodhi, so why should I believe that it is possible to attain Bodhi? **You should now realize that there is no cause for the existence of any phenomena**; for no reason whatsoever, they come into being." Actually, he can only see within the range of eighty thousand great eons, and he has no idea of what occurs beyond that period of time.

When the Buddha was in the world, an old man came to the monastery wishing to leave the home-life. The Buddha was away on the road and not at the monastery. The Arhats there all took a look at the old man, who was probably over eighty years old, with wrinkled skin, white hair, and an unsteady gait. Whenever a person requested to leave the home-life, the Arhats would look into his past causes and future effects. Now they contemplated the old man's causes and found that in the past eighty thousand eons he had not planted a single good root; he had not done any good deeds.

The great Arhats said, “Since you didn’t plant good roots, you cannot leave the home-life.”

You shouldn’t think leaving home is so easy. To leave home, you have to plant good roots for Bodhi in life after life. So the Arhats told the old man, “Although you wish to leave the home-life now, since you don’t have any good roots, we can’t allow you to leave home. You’d better go.”

When the old man heard that he began to cry. He began to weep as he thought about his unlucky fate. At such an advanced age, he had wished to leave the homelife and had been rejected by the Buddha’s disciples. As he walked along crying, he thought, “I might as well commit suicide. I could hang myself or throw myself into the river. I don’t want to live anymore.” However, his one thought of sincerity evoked a response. The Buddha came back and asked him, “What are you crying for?”

He said, “I wanted to leave the home-life, but the Buddha wasn’t at the monastery and the Buddha’s disciples wouldn’t allow me to leave home. They said that I hadn’t planted any good roots or done any good deeds in the last eighty thousand great eons. That’s why I think I’d be better off dead. There’s no point in living.”

The Buddha said, “Don’t cry anymore. I will help you. I will let you leave the home-life. Come with me to the monastery.” Thus the old man returned to the monastery and left the home-life under the Buddha. All of the Buddha’s disciples were perplexed.

“Strange! The Buddha accepts only those who have good roots. why did the Buddha accept that old man, who didn’t have any good roots?” the disciples wondered

The Buddha told them, “You Arhats can only see the events that occur within eighty thousand great eons. You don’t know what goes on beyond this period. More than eighty thousand great eons ago, this old man was a woodcutter in the mountains. One day he saw a tiger and climbed up a tree to save himself. The tiger started gnawing at the tree, intending to devour the man. When it had just about chewed through the tree, the man got so nervous that he cried

out, ‘Namo Buddha!’ The tiger immediately left. When it had gone far away, the man climbed down from the tree and went home, saved from being eaten by the tiger. His one recitation of ‘Namo Buddha’ planted the seed for a good root more than eighty thousand years ago. It is now time for that seed to sprout and bear fruit. That’s why he is now able to leave the home-life.” The Buddha’s explanation resolved his disciples’ doubts.

The cultivator of samadhi says there is no cause for the existence of anything because he is unaware of the events occurring beyond the period of eighty thousand great eons.

M3 He mistakes the principle and falls for an externalist teaching.

Sutra:

“Because of this speculation, he will lose proper and pervasive knowledge, fall into externalism, and become confused about the Bodhi nature.

Commentary:

Because of this speculation, he will lose proper and pervasive knowledge and views, **fall into externalism, and become confused about the Bodhi nature.** He will not understand the Bodhi nature.

K3 Concludes that it is an externalist teaching.

Sutra:

“This is the first external teaching, which postulates the absence of cause.

Commentary:

It maintains that there is no origin or cause for anything.

J2 Four theories regarding pervasive permanence.
K1 Describes their source and shows the error.

Sutra:

“Ananda, in his practice of samadhi, the good person’s mind is unmoving, clear, and proper and can no longer be disturbed

by demons. He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. But if he begins to speculate on its pervasive constancy, he could fall into error with four theories of pervasive permanence.

Commentary:

Ananda, in his practice of samadhi, the good person's mind is unmoving, clear, and proper. His proper mind has the wisdom that develops from samadhi, **and** it **can no longer be disturbed by demons.** By now, the demon kings can no longer use their tricks to disturb his samadhi. But sometimes transformations happen in his own formations skandha, causing him to have wrong ideas. These are known as "demons of one's own mind."

He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. He examines the ephemeral and elusive origin of all beings and finds a subtle movement a constant vibration. **But if he begins to speculate on its pervasive constancy,** that subtle fluctuation, **he could fall into error with four theories of pervasive permanence.** This person could give rise to wrong speculations and be ensnared in the views of pervasive permanence. What are the four theories?

K2 Detailed explanation of their appearance.
L1 He speculates that the mind and states are permanent.

Sutra:

"First, as this person thoroughly investigates the mind and its states, he may conclude that both are causeless. Through his cultivation, he knows that in twenty thousand eons, as beings in the ten directions undergo endless rounds of birth and death, they are never annihilated. Therefore, he speculates that the mind and its states are permanent.

Commentary:

First as this person thoroughly investigates the nature of the **mind and its states, he may** come up with a wrong view and **conclude that both are causeless.** There is no source from which they spring.

Through his cultivation, he knows that in twenty thousand eons, as beings in the ten directions undergo endless rounds of birth and death, they are never annihilated. Through the cultivation of samadhi, he becomes aware of the production and destruction of all living beings within twenty thousand eons. He sees them going through the endless cycle, being born and dying, over and over. Yet they are never annihilated. **Therefore, he speculates that the mind and its states are permanent** and will never change.

L2 He speculates that the four elements are permanent.

Sutra:

"Second, as this person thoroughly investigates the source of the four elements, he may conclude that they are permanent in nature. Through his cultivation, he knows that in forty thousand eons, as living beings in the ten directions undergo births and deaths, their substances exist permanently and are never annihilated. Therefore, he speculates that this situation is permanent.

Commentary:

What is the second theory? **As this person thoroughly investigates the source of the four elements –** earth, water, fire, and air **– he may conclude that they are permanent in nature.** He claims the natures of earth, water, fire, and air are permanent and indestructible. Actually earth, water, fire, and air are created from the false thoughts of living beings and have no substance at all. Without any substance, how can they be permanent? That is a misconception. **Through his cultivation, he knows that in forty thousand eons, as living beings in the ten directions undergo**

births and deaths, their substances exist permanently and are never annihilated. Therefore, he speculates that this situation is permanent. He says that the nature of their births and deaths is permanent and unchanging. It has never been interrupted. That is the second theory.

L3 He speculates that the eight consciousnesses are permanent.

Sutra:

"Third, as this person thoroughly investigates the sixth sense faculty, the manas, and the consciousness that grasps and receives, he concludes that the origin of mind, intellect, and consciousness is permanent. Through his cultivation, he knows that in eighty thousand eons, as all living beings in the ten directions revolve in transmigration, this origin is never destroyed and exists permanently. Investigating this undestroyed origin, he speculates that it is permanent.

Commentary:

Third, as this person thoroughly investigates the sixth sense faculty – the sixth (mind) consciousness, **the manas** consciousness, which was previously called the defiled consciousness, **and the consciousness that grasps and receives, he concludes that the origin of mind, intellect and consciousness –** of the sixth and seventh consciousnesses-**is** fundamentally **permanent**.

Through his cultivation of the skill of directing the hearing inward to listen to the inherent nature, **he knows that in eighty thousand eons, as all living beings in the ten directions revolve in transmigration,** undergoing repeated births and deaths, **this origin is never destroyed and exists permanently** and without change. **Investigating this undestroyed origin, he speculates that it is permanent** and not subject to change.

L4 He speculates that the cessation of thoughts is permanent.

Sutra:

"Fourth, since this person has ended the source of thoughts, there is no more reason for them to arise. In the state of flowing, halting, and turning, the thinking mind – which was the cause of production and destruction – has now ceased forever, and so he naturally thinks that this is a state of non-production and non-destruction. As a result of such reasoning, he speculates that this state is permanent.

Commentary:

Fourth, since this person has ended the source of thoughts, there is no more reason for them to arise. Once he breaks through the thinking skandha, the cause for false thoughts to arise is gone. He has samadhi power over the thoughts in his mind. With an unmoving, dear, and proper mind, he has no opportunity to entertain false thoughts. **In the state of flowing, halting, and turning** of the formations skandha, **the thinking mind – which was the cause of production and destruction – has now ceased forever**. He no longer has false thoughts, **and so he naturally thinks that this is a state of non-production and non-destruction. As a result of such reasoning, he speculates that this state is permanent** and unchanging.

K3 Concludes that it is an externalist teaching.

Sutra:

"Because of these speculations of permanence, he will lose proper and pervasive knowledge, fall into externalism, and become confused about the Bodhi nature. This is the second external teaching, which postulates pervasive permanence.

Commentary:

Because of these speculations, these four theories of pervasive **permanence, he will lose** the wisdom of **proper and pervasive knowledge, fall into externalism, and become confused about**

the Bodhi nature. Once he starts following external teachings, he will not be able to understand the Bodhi nature. **This is the second external teaching, which postulates pervasive permanence.**

J3 Four upside-down theories.
K1 Describes the source and shows the error.

Sutra:

"Further, in his practice of samadhi, the good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. But if he begins to speculate about self and others, he could fall into error with theories of partial impermanence and partial permanence based on four distorted views.

Commentary:

Further, in his practice of samadhi, the good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. When this good person cultivates and attains solid samadhi, his mind becomes proper, so (external) demons have no chance to obstruct him. However, demons may arise within his own mind. **He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all** twelve **categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation** that appears in the formations skandha at this stage in his cultivation.

But if he begins to speculate about self and others, he could fall into error with theories of partial impermanence and partial permanence based on four distorted views. Indulging in false thoughts about self and others, he creates demons in his own mind and comes up with four distorted views. He says that things are both permanent and impermanent, both produced and destroyed, both moving and still, both deified and pure, and both alive and dead. He defends both sides of the issue and refuses to make a decision. He says, "This way is right and that way is also right." He says things are impermanent, but he also says things are

permanent. That's upside down. His lack of resolution confuses people.

K2 Detailed explanation of their appearance.
L1 Speculation regarding self and others.

Sutra:

"First, as this person contemplates the wonderfully bright mind pervading the ten directions, he concludes that this state of profound stillness is the ultimate spiritual self. Then he speculates, 'My spiritual self, which is settled, bright and unmoving, pervades the ten directions. All living beings are within my mind, and there they are born and die by themselves. Therefore, my mind is permanent while those who undergo birth and death there are truly impermanent.'

Commentary:

What does he say in his first theory? **First, as this person** who cultivates the Way **contemplates the wonderfully bright mind** fully **pervading the ten directions, he concludes that this-state of profound stillness** and purity **is the ultimate spiritual self. Then he speculates, "My spiritual self, which is settled, bright and unmoving, pervades the ten directions.** My mind is in a state of unmoving suchness, replete with samadhi power and wisdom that are perfectly bright and unmoving."

He says, "Since my mind pervades the ten directions, **all living beings are** contained **within my mind, and there they are born and die by themselves,** over and over. **Therefore, my mind is permanent** and not subject to birth and death, **while those who undergo birth and death there are truly impermanent.** The living beings in my mind are continually undergoing birth and death. Therefore, they must be impermanent in nature. My mind pervades the ten directions, permanent and unchanging. But the beings with-in it, undergoing birth and death, are impermanent."

L2 Speculation regarding worlds.

Sutra:

"Second, instead of contemplating his own mind, this person contemplates in the ten directions worlds as many as the Ganges' sands. He regards as ultimately impermanent those worlds that are in eons of decay, and as ultimately permanent those that are not in eons of decay.

Commentary:

Second, instead of contemplating his own mind, this person contemplates in the ten directions worlds as many as the Ganges' sands. He does not look within his mind, as above when he saw his own mind pervading the ten directions. Rather, he looks outside at the worlds in the ten directions, as numerous as the Ganges' sands.

He regards as ultimately impermanent those worlds that are in eons of decay, and as ultimately permanent those that are not in eons of decay. He sees a certain world that has reached the eon of decay in the cycle of becoming, dwelling, decay and emptiness, and he claims that it is ultimately impermanent in nature. Seeing another world that is not in the eon of decay, he says that it is ultimately permanent. So there are both impermanence and permanence.

L3 Speculation regarding his body and mind.

Sutra:

"Third, this person closely examines his own mind and finds it to be subtle and mysterious, like fine motes of dust swirling in the ten directions, unchanging in nature. And yet it can cause his body to be born and then to die. He regards that indestructible nature as his permanent intrinsic nature, and that which undergoes birth and death and flows forth from him as impermanent.

Commentary:

In the **third** distorted theory, **this person closely examines his own mind and finds it to be subtle and mysterious.** He scrutinizes his own mind in its most subtle and mysterious aspects. These aspects, which are so elusive that they can hardly be perceived, characterize the formations skandha. These states are like tiny ripples on water, or **like fine motes of dust swirling in the ten directions.** The continuous flowing movement is **unchanging in nature. And yet it can cause his body to be born and then to die.** It causes his body to undergo repeated births and deaths.

He regards that indestructible nature of the flowing movement **as his permanent intrinsic nature.** He says, "This is the permanence of my own nature." **And that which undergoes birth and death and flows forth from him as impermanent.** He says, "All the beings that are born and die, over and over, flowing forth from this permanent nature of mine, are themselves impermanent in nature."

L4 Speculation regarding neither self nor others.

Sutra:

"Fourth, knowing that the skandha of thinking has ended and seeing the flowing of the skandha of formations, this person speculates that the continuous flow of the skandha of formations is permanent, and that the skandhas of form, feeling, and thinking which have already ended are impermanent.

Commentary:

Fourth, knowing that the skandha of thinking has ended and seeing the subtle **flowing,** like ripples, **of the skandha of formations** as he cultivates, **this person speculates that the continuous flow of the skandha of formations is permanent.** Seeing no change in it, he concludes, "Oh, it must be permanent in nature." **And that the skandhas of form, feeling, and thinking**

which have already ended are impermanent. Since they are gone, he thinks they must be impermanent.

K3 Concludes that it is an externalist teaching.

Sutra:

"Because of these speculations of impermanence and permanence, he will fall into externalism and become confused about the Bodhi nature. This is the third external teaching, which postulates partial permanence.

Commentary:

Because of these four wrong theories based on his **speculations of impermanence and permanence, he will** lose proper and pervasive knowledge, **fall into externalism, id become confused about the Bodhi nature.** He says, "This part is permanent and that part is impermanent." Because he has these inverted theories and doesn't even understand their implications himself, he adopts the ideas of external teachings and becomes confused about the actual nature of Bodhi. **This is the third external teaching, which postulates partial permanence.** This third inverted theory advocated by external sects maintains that things are partially permanent and partially impermanent.

J4 Four theories regarding finiteness.
K1 Describes the source and shows the error.

Sutra:

"Further, in his practice of samadhi, the good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. But if he begins to speculate about the making of certain distinctions, he could fall into error with four theories of finiteness.

Commentary:

Further, in his practice of samadhi, the good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. This refers to any good person who cultivates the samadhi of directing the hearing inward to listen to his own nature, thus attaining perfect penetration of the ear organ. when he has broken through the three skandhas of form, feeling and thinking, he has solid samadhi and his mind is proper. Thus, the demons of the heavens and those of external sects cannot affect him in any way.

When the two skandhas of form and feeling still existed, the demons from the heavens were able to disturb his mind directly. when he reached the thinking skandha, the demons could no longer do so; they had to possess another person in order to disrupt his samadhi. Now, at the stage of the formations skandha, the demons cannot disturb his samadhi even if they possess another person. That's what is meant by a "firm, unmoving, and proper" mind. The demons can not get at him.

He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all twelve categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. He contemplates this most concealed, ephemeral nature of living beings, within the subtle movement of the formations skandha. **But if he begins to speculate about the making of certain distinctions…** He ponders and reflects, and makes four kinds of distinctions, which will be discussed below. **He could** then **fall into error with four theories of finiteness.** Once he gets to thinking, he comes up with four theories of finiteness which belong to external teachings.

K2 Detailed explanation of their appearance.
L1 Speculation regarding the three periods of time.

Sutra:

"First, this person speculates that the origin of life flows and functions ceaselessly. He judges that the past and the future are finite and that the continuity of the mind is infinite.

Commentary:

The first of the four distinctions regards the three periods of time – the past, the present, and the future. It's said, "You may search for the mind in the three periods of time, but the mind is not there." The mind of the past cannot be obtained, the mind of the present cannot be obtained, and the mind of the future cannot be obtained. why not? Let's consider the past. What is the past? The past has already gone by, so the mind of the past cannot be obtained. As for the present it never stops. Right now, you say this is the present, but it has already become the past. If you then say this is the present it too has passed. The present never stays fixed, so where is your present mind? what about the future mind? The future has not come yet. Since it hasn't arrived, it doesn't exist, either. Therefore,

You may search for the mind in the three periods of time,
but it is not there.
Where there is no mind,
false conditions do not exist.

Since even the mind is gone, where could there be any false thoughts? if you can understand this principle, you will find that there actually aren't any! In the Treasury of the Tathagata, there is nothing at all.

This cultivator, however, has developed an attachment. What is he attached to? The ideas of finite and infinite. He says things are either finite or infinite, setting up so-called "theories" of what is finite and infinite. **First, this person speculates that the origin of life flows and functions ceaselessly.** In the state of the formations skandha, he conjectures that the origin of the twelve categories of living beings flows and functions without interruption. This ceaseless flowing and functioning is a manifestation of the formations skandha.

At that time, **he judges that the past and the future are finite.** He says that the past and the future are both bounded, but that's

nonsense. How could the past and the future be finite? Based on his false speculations and attachments, he says that they are finite, but in fact, they are infinite. In the course of cultivation, his mind has become muddled, and he has no wisdom. Having broken through the thinking skandha, he gets confused and strays off the proper path in the formations skandha. That's why he makes conjectures of the finite and the infinite. **And** he reckons **that the continuity of the mind is infinite.** He says, "This present mind continues without interruption in the present. It has no limit or boundary, and is infinite."

L2 Speculation regarding what he hears and sees.

Sutra:

"Second, as this person contemplates an interval of eighty thousand eons, he can see living beings; but earlier than eighty thousand eons is a time of stillness in which he cannot hear or see anything. He regards as infinite that time in which nothing is heard or seen, and as finite that interval in which living beings are seen to exist.

Commentary:

What is the second distinction? It is the distinction of what he can see and hear and what he cannot see and hear. He takes what he can see and hear as one side, and what he cannot see and hear as the other side, so he falls into duality again. Neither side is the Middle Way.

Second, as this person contemplates an interval of eighty thousand eons, he can see living beings. When he sits in meditation, his samadhi allows him to contemplate an interval as long as eighty thousand great eons, and he can perceive all the twelve categories of beings within that time. **But earlier than eighty thousand eons is a time of stillness in which he cannot hear or see anything.** He can see with extreme clarity the events within the interval of eighty thousand eons. He can see beings

undergoing endless rounds of birth and death. But he cannot see or hear what is happening outside of that interval.

He regards as infinite and unbounded **that time in which nothing is heard or seen, and as finite** and bounded **that interval in which living beings are seen to exist.** He falls into duality again, becoming attached to existence and nonexistence. Attaching to nonexistence means clinging to emptiness. Attaching to existence means clinging to forms. Neither accords with the Middle Way. Therefore the Buddha criticizes such a person for following an external sect.

L3 Speculation regarding self and others.

Sutra:

"Third, this person speculates that his own pervasive knowledge is infinite and that all other people appear within his awareness. And yet, since he himself has never perceived the nature of their awareness, he says they have not obtained an infinite mind, but have only a finite one.

Commentary:

Third, this person speculates that his own pervasive knowledge is infinite. The third distinction is the distinction between self and others. "Others" refers to living beings, and "self" refers to the cultivator himself. He makes yet another false speculation and becomes attached to it. He says, "I feel that I possess the wisdom of pervasive know-ledge." What is meant by pervasive knowledge? Pervasive knowledge means there is nothing that is not known; therefore, it has the quality of being infinite.

And he says **that all other people,** all living beings, **appear within his awareness.** They are all contained within his wisdom.

And yet, since he himself has never perceived the nature of their awareness, he says they have not obtained an infinite mind, but have only a finite one. Living beings have not obtained a boundless mind, but he himself has. Because he does not know the nature of their knowledge, he says that they have. not obtained

a boundless mind and do not have boundless wisdom, but have only a bounded wisdom. That is the distinction of self and others.

L4 Speculation regarding production and destruction.

Sutra:

"Fourth, this person thoroughly investigates the formations skandha to the point that it becomes empty. Based on what he sees, in his mind he speculates that each and every living being, in its given body, is half living and half dead. From this he concludes that everything in the world is half finite and half infinite.

Commentary:

Fourth, this person thoroughly investigates the formations skandha to the point that it becomes empty. What is the fourth distinction? It is that of the living and the dead. He examines the formations skandha to the utmost extent, until it becomes empty. **Based on what he sees** and understands from his investigations, **in his mind he speculates that each and every living being, in its given body, is half living and half dead.** This is another false speculation and false attachment. He sees any given living being's body as half living and half dead. Since living beings are like that he draws conclusions about the whole world. **From this he concludes that everything in the world is half finite and half infinite.** Life is on the side of the finite, and death is on the side of the infinite. That's his conjecture. The more he runs, the farther away he gets.

K3 Concludes that it is an externalist teaching.

Sutra:

"Because of these speculations about the finite and the infinite, he will fall into externalism and become confused about the Bodhi nature. This is the fourth external teaching, which postulates finiteness.

Commentary:

Because of these four **speculations about the finite and the infinite…** What does he conjecture? If it's not finite, then it's infinite. If it's not infinite, then it's finite. He keeps going back and forth like this, and generally does not stay on the Middle Way. He either goes too far or does not go far enough. Either he runs far away, or he doesn't even take a single step. Therefore, **he will** lose proper and pervasive knowledge and **fall into externalism.** External teachings either go too far, or else they don't go far enough. Neither going too far nor coming up short is the Middle Way. We should cultivate the Middle Way. The Buddha spoke of the ultimate truth of the Middle Way as neither falling into emptiness nor falling into existence. If you lean to the side of emptiness or the side of existence, then you fall into duality. It's called an external teaching because there are two sides. **And** he will **become confused about the** true **Bodhi nature.** He does not recognize Bodhi. **This is the fourth external teaching, which postulates finiteness.**

J5 Four kinds of sophistry.
K1 Describes the source and shows the error.

Sutra:

"Further, in his practice of samadhi, the good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. But if he begins to speculate on what he knows and sees, he could fall into error with four distorted, false theories, which are total speculation based on the sophistry of immortality.

Commentary:

Further, in his practice of samadhi, the good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. This refers to all good people who are cultivating and abiding in samadhi; this samadhi is cultivated by many people, not

just one. Since the cultivator has a steady mind in which samadhi and wisdom are equally balanced, there is no opening for the demons to get at him. But although external demons cannot bother him, internal demons arise. Internal demons are the demons created from transformations in his own mind.

He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. He looks into the origin of the twelve categories of living beings, examining the primal purity of their nature. The constant fluctuation is a very subtle, attenuated motion that occurs in the formations skandha.

But if he begins to speculate on what he knows and sees… Before he has such thoughts, there is no problem. But as soon as those thoughts arise, there is trouble. As it's said, "Opening the mouth is a mistake. Entertain a thought is wrong." As soon as you have a false thought problems arrive.

He could fall into error with four distorted, false theories, which are total speculation based on the sophistry of immortality. Total speculation refers to the Nature That Is Totally Speculation and Attachment, which I have discussed before. It is a kind of false attachment. He becomes attached to something that is not true.

[January 1983]

Looking into the question of "Who is reciting the Buddha's name?" is called "investigation." As I have said many times before, investigation means concentrating on one thing.

With concentration, it is efficacious.
With distraction, nothing is obtained.

Concentration can be compared to drilling a hole with an awl or to using a diamond drill to drill steel. The drill penetrating to the other side represents enlightenment. "Who is reciting the Buddha's name?" refers to reciting in one's mind.

“Investigating” means searching, which is different from “speculating.” Searching means concentrating and looking in one place, searching for “Who?” It means looking into a principle. Speculating, on the other hand, is not a single thought. Rather, it involves thinking about this and about that, and making comparisons. Speculation means having a lot of false thoughts, while investigation consists of one false thought. One who is speculating thinks about several things and cannot make up his mind. He thinks about the heavens and wonders what kind of clothes God wears, what kind of hat he wears, how big his eyes are, how long his ears are, and how wide his nose is. He speculates on God’s measurements, trying to measure God’s size in inches and feet. But ultimately, is God really the way he speculates him to be? He’s never seen God, so his measurements may not be right.

He also thinks about the earth, speculating on the earth’s gravitational pull. How big is the earth’s center? How large is the earth’s surface area? How many specks of dust are there on the earth? He estimates that the earth is composed of a hundred million times eighty-four thousand specks of dust amassed together. He’s guessing and calculating on his own, but probably even a computer wouldn’t be able to compute this figure. He tries to use himself as a computer to compute it but he can’t come up with the head or tail of an answer, so he thinks it’s rather freaky.

Therefore, “investigating” does not fall under the formations skandha; it is not under form, feeling, thinking, formations, or consciousness. “Reciting” means you recite in your mind, concentrating single-mindedly. For example, when you recite “Namo Amitabha Buddha,” there is only the phrase “Namo Amitabha Buddha,” and you have no other false thoughts. This is called fighting poison with poison. If you have lots of false thoughts, then the poison is too great and you will surely die.

K2 Detailed explanation of their appearance.
L1 Eight sophistries.

Sutra:

"First, this person contemplates the source of transformations. Seeing the movement and flow, he says there is change. Seeing the continuity, he says there is constancy. Where he can perceive something, he says there is production. Where he cannot perceive anything, he says there is destruction. He says that the unbroken continuity of causes is increasing and that the pauses within the continuity are decreasing. He says that the arising of all things is existence and that the perishing of all things is nonexistence. The light of reason shows that his application of mind has led to inconsistent views. If someone comes to seek the Dharma, asking about its meaning, he replies, 'I am both alive and dead, both existent and nonexistent, both increasing and decreasing.' He always speaks in a confusing way, causing that person to forget what he was going to say.

Commentary:

First, this person, who is about to go down the path of confusion, **contemplates the source of transformations** in his formations skandha. **Seeing the movement and flow, he says there is change.** He observes the flowing of the formations skandha and says it is undergoing changes. **Seeing the continuity, he says there is constancy.** Perceiving the formations skandha continuing on without cease, he calls it constancy. "Constant" means unchanging. Change implies impermanence, while lack of change implies permanence.

Where he can perceive something, he says there is production. When he contemplates the formations skandha, some areas are visible to him. He sees the subtle movements and describes them as "production." **Where he cannot perceive anything, he says there is destruction.** He cannot detect the tiny movements of the formations skandha, so he says this is "destruction." In other words, he can perceive the events within eighty

thousand great eons, so he says they have come into being. He cannot see the events beyond eighty thousand eons, so he says they have ceased to be. This is similar to the previous cases.

He says that the unbroken continuity of causes is increasing. When the causes continue without interruption, he says there's an increase. That's another aspect of the formations skandha that he perceives. **And that the pauses within the continuity are decreasing.** Within the continuity there are pauses, and he says they are a decrease. For example, when the Twenty-five Sages described their perfect penetrations, one of them talked about the pause between inhaling and exhaling. That is also a "pause." He calls the pauses within the continuity "decreasing." But you shouldn't follow his theories, because he is making up his own terminology based on his perceptions, and they are fundamentally untrue. Don't look for rational principles in his theories. He just made them up, and they are totally irrational. That's why these are considered the views of external sects. There is no truth in them.

He says that the arising of all things is existence. He watches things arise within the formations skandha, and he calls that existence. **And that the perishing of all things is nonexistence.** He calls the place where everything passes away and nothing exists "nonexistent." These are the four distorted theories. **The light of reason shows that his application of mind has led to inconsistent views.** If you examine his theories in light of reason, you see that they are all wrong. He used his mind in the wrong way. At this time, **if someone comes to seek the Dharma, asking about its meaning,** requesting instruction on the principles of Buddhism, **he replies** to the person, **"I am both alive and dead, both existent and nonexistent, both increasing and decreasing."**

He always speaks in a confusing way. He invariably defends both sides of the issue. If he isn't talking about existence, then he's talking about nonexistence. If he's not discussing emptiness, then he's discussing form. Because he speaks from both sides, he cannot find the Middle Way, **causing that person** who is seeking the

Dharma **to forget what he was going to say.** Faced with the first person's nonsensical explanations, the questioner forgets all his questions and cannot recall what he came to seek instruction in. What kind of instruction would you call that? People come wanting to understand, but the cultivator confuses them until they lose all sense of what is right. They lose not only their train of thought, but also their original wisdom and clarity of mind. This person is confused, and he makes others confused, too.

L2 The sophistry of only "no."

Sutra:

"Second, this person attentively contemplates his mind and finds that everything is nonexistent. He has a realization based on nonexistence. When anyone comes to ask him questions, he replies with only one word. He only says 'No.' Aside from saying 'no,' he does not speak.

Commentary:

The person only knows about nothingness, so he talks in a crazy way. He denies the existence of everything. No matter what you ask him, he says "no." That's the only word he says. **Second, this person attentively contemplates** and examines **his mind and finds that everything is nonexistent.** Among the twelve categories of living beings, he feels that in the mind of the formations skandha, everything is gone. At the point where he sees nothing, **he has a realization based on nonexistence.** He thinks that he has attained wisdom based on "nonexistence." Actually, he doesn't understand. He has gone too far overboard, and his views are completely irrational. He develops an attachment to the idea of "nonexistence" and thinks he's enlightened. What did he enlighten to? The word "no."

So **when anyone comes to ask him questions, he replies with only one word.** People think he must be a seasoned cultivator, because he keeps his eyes shut and nurtures his spirit, not saying a word all day long. He eats nothing except a few bananas. Thinking

that he is a sage, they request the Dharma from him. when they do, he really knows how to put on an act by giving one-word replies. This tactic is called “One-Word Chan.” People call it that because they don’t understand what he’s talking about. No matter what you ask him, **he only says “No.”**

“How should I cultivate?” you ask.

“No.”

“Should I recite the Buddha’s name?”

“No.”

“Do you think it would be a good idea to observe the moral rules and receive the precepts?”

“No.”

His continual response of “no” bewilders you and you forget what you were going to say. You wonder, “What does he mean by ‘no’? No what?” You can’t figure it out, but then it finally hits you, “Oh! There really is nothing. It’s truly nothing.” Aside from saying “no,” he does not speak. You may ask him one question, ten questions, a hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand questions, but he will always answer “no.” Then you think, “The Chan principles he’s talking about must be too lofty; that’s why we can’t understand them.”

L3 The sophistry of only “yes.”

Sutra:

“Third, this person attentively contemplates his mind and finds that everything is existent. He has a realization based on existence. When anyone comes to ask him questions, he replies with only one word. He only says ‘Yes.’ Aside from saying ‘yes,’ he does not speak.

Commentary:

In the **third** kind of false sophistry, **this person attentively contemplates his mind and finds that everything is existent.** He

looks into his mind and sees that the twelve categories of living beings all undergo birth and death in this place of existence. **He has a realization based on existence.** Actually, he has not realized any fruition. The Sutra only says that in order to describe his mistake: He contemplates living beings and says, “Ah! They all exist.” Perceiving this principle, he thinks he has become enlightened and has realized the fruition.

When anyone comes to ask him questions, he replies with only one word. No matter what Dharma he is asked about, **he only says “Yes.”**

“Would it be a good idea for me to leave the home-life and become a monk?” you ask him.

“Yes.”

“Would it be good for me to take the five precepts?”

“Yes.”

“What would be the best thing for me to do?”

“Yes.”

Aside from saying “yes,” he does not speak. He doesn’t say anything but “yes,” so you think, “Oh! This is really One-Word Chan. He must be a lofty Sanghan. The Dharma he speaks is so wonderful that I don’t even understand it.” It’s wonderful precisely because you don’t understand it. For example, if you understand what I’m now lecturing in this Sutra, then it’s not wonderful.

“The Dharma Master keeps talking and talking, but I don’t understand what’s he saying,” you may say.

In that case, it’s wonderful for you. Simply because you don’t understand, it is wonderful. Once you understand it, it’s not wonderful anymore. why not? Because you understand it! Whatever you don’t understand is wonderful. Therefore, if you want the wonderful, don’t study the Buddha dharma. If you don’t study, then you won’t know it and it will be wonderful.

Regardless of what you say, he says "yes." Why is that? He believes he has become enlightened on account of the word "yes," and so he's transmitting that Dharma to you.

L4 The sophistry of existence and non-existence.

Sutra:

"Fourth, this person perceives both existence and nonexistence. Experiencing this branching, his mind becomes confused. When anyone comes to ask questions, he tells them, 'Existence is also nonexistence. But within nonexistence there is no existence.' It is all sophistry and does not stand up under scrutiny.

Commentary:

His fourth fallacious theory concerns existence and non-existence. What is this theory? He says things both exist and do not exist. But he says things that don't exist cannot also exist and things that exist cannot also not exist. He does not know whether it's existent or nonexistent. He talks wildly, like a drunkard.

Fourth, this person perceives both existence and nonexistence within the formations skandha. He perceives the formations skandha to be like waves flowing ceaselessly, so he says that it exists. He says the pauses within the ceaseless flow are nonexistence. **Experiencing this branching, his mind becomes confused.** His state has produced a branching off, just like on a tree, so he declares that things both exist and do not exist. His mind is confused because he doesn't have any true wisdom or samadhi. His wisdom and his samadhi are not balanced. At this point he becomes attached and cannot find his way out of the mess. He's confronted with a wrong road and doesn't know which road is right.

When anyone comes to ask questions and request instruction in the Dharma, **he tells them,** "**Existence is also nonexistence.** Things that exist also do not exist. **But within nonexistence there is no existence.** But things that do not exist cannot come into existence." What already exists is also nonexistent. However, what

is nonexistent does not exist. Ultimately, what kind of theory is that? **It is all sophistry.** That kind of reasoning is fallacious. He doesn't know what he's saying. That's why I said that he talks like a drunkard.

And what he says **does not stand up under scrutiny.** There's no way to hold a reasonable discussion with him. What can you do then? You can only use my method, which is to slap him across the mouth and see if he still talks about existence and nonexistence. If you slap him, he might react by asking, "Why did you hit me?"

"But you don't exist, remember? So my slapping you also doesn't exist!" There's another tactic-you can take a knife and say, "Hey! I'm gonna kill you," and see whether or not he exists. You cannot reason with him. What he says cannot stand up under scrutiny, and you shouldn't ask him about it.

K3 Concludes that it is an externalist teaching.

Sutra:

"Because of these speculations, which are empty sophistries, he will fall into externalism and become confused about the Bodhi nature. This is the fifth external teaching, which postulates four distorted, false theories that are total speculation based on the sophistry of immortality.

Commentary:

Because of these four theories or **speculations, which are empty sophistries…** His theories are impossible imaginings. The things he says simply cannot be. There is no truth in his doctrines. For that reason, **he will fail into externalism.** Why is it called an external teaching? Because the principles in it are improper. His knowledge and views are wrong, so the principles he expounds are not ultimate. They don't get to the bottom of things. **And** he will **become confused about the Bodhi nature.** He doesn't know the true path to enlightenment. The genuine path of Bodhi is not clear to him. **This is the fifth external teaching, which postulates four**

‘distorted, false theories that are total speculation based on the sophistry of immortality.

In the first theory, he says that he is both alive and dead, both existent and nonexistent, both increasing and decreasing. In the second case, he answers all questions with the word “no.” He says “No, no, no” all day long, never saying any other word. No matter what anyone says to him, he just says “no.” If you ask a thousand or ten thousand questions, you’ll get that many replies of “no.”

In the third case, he says “yes” to everything.

“Can I be a thief?” you ask.

“Yes.”

“Can I take the precepts?”

“Yes.”

“Is it all right to eat excrement?”

“Yes.”

“Is it all right to drink urine?”

“Yes.”

“Can you die?”

“Yes.”

“Can you go on living in this world?”

“Yes.”

No matter what you say, he says “yes,” a thousand or ten thousand times. There is nothing that is not a “yes.” His “yes” signifies existence – everything exists.

In the fourth case, which is the one under discussion fight now, he says that existence implies nonexistence, but that nonexistence does not imply existence. Ultimately, what kind of principle is that? It’s the kind of principle that he expounds these four distorted theories based on the sophistry of immortality. His theories are incoherent and unclear.

They are total speculation, with no reality to them. In the past I explained (1) The Nature That Is Totally Speculation and Attachment, (2) The Nature That Arises Dependent on Something Else, and (3) The Perfectly Accomplished Real Nature. I don't know if everyone is clear about the principle.

What is the Nature That Is Totally Speculation and Attachment? Suppose you see a rope lying on the ground on a night when there isn't much moonlight. You may think, "Oh, is it a snake?" That's the Nature That Is Totally Speculation and Attachment. Actually, it's a rope, but you make the false judgment that it is a snake. Suppose you see the silhouette of a tree or a plant on a moonless night, and you think, "Oh, could that be a ghost?" and you get scared.

Maybe at night you see a dog, and you think, "Oh, is that a wolf or a tiger?" That's the Nature That Is Totally Speculation and Attachment at work. when you get a better look, you realize that it's just a dog, not a wolf or a tiger. That's The Nature That Arises Dependent on Something Else. Based on the dog, your Nature That Is Totally Speculation and Attachment comes into being. It is really a dog. What is a dog? It is an animal. Because you have the Nature That Is Totally Speculation and Attachment, you mistake it for a wok, a tiger, or some sort of strange creature. The same thing happens when you see a plant.

You thought that rope was a snake, but when you get a better look, you see that it's only a rope. The rope is called the Nature That Arises Dependent on Something Else. What is the Nature That Arises Dependent on Something Else? Well, what is the rope made from? It's made from hemp. The hemp is called the Perfectly Accomplished Real Nature. Hemp can be made into a rope, and that is the Nature That Arises Dependent on Something Else. Based on the Perfectly Accomplished Real Nature, the Nature That Arises Dependent on Something Else comes into being. Then when you do not see and recognize it dearly, the Nature That Is Totally Speculation and Attachment comes into being. Here the follower of

this external teaching is the same. What he says isn't the way things really are. He comes up with these false theories that are totally based on speculation and attachment.

J6 The sixteen ways in which form can exist after death.
K1 Describes the source and shows the error.

Sutra:

"Further, in his practice of samadhi, the good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. But if he begins to speculate on the endless flow, he could fall into error with the confused idea that forms exist after death.

Commentary:

Further, in his practice of samadhi, the good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. This refers to any good person who cultivates and attains solid samadhi. Because he has firm samadhi and a proper mind, the demon kings cannot have their way with him. Their tricks are all played out. But although the demons' tricks cannot touch him, demons can arise right within his own mind. These demons of the mind are the most difficult to subdue.

He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all twelve **categories of beings –** that is, the fundamental source of all living beings, **and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation.** He observes the elusive, light, and fleeting original nature of the twelve categories of living beings. This original nature is just the formations skandha, which is characterized by subtle fluctuation. **But if he begins to speculate on the endless flow,** the subtle fluctuation which is like the continual motion of waves on the water, **he could fall into error with the confused idea that forms exist after death.** Speculating that there is existence after death, his mind becomes confused.

K2 Detailed explanation of their appearance.

Sutra:

"He may strongly identify with his body and say that form is himself; or he may see himself as perfectly encompassing all worlds and say that he contains form; or he may perceive all external conditions as contingent upon himself and say that form belongs to him; or he may decide that he relies on the continuity of the formations skandha and say that he is within form.

Commentary:

He may strongly identify with his body and say that form is himself. The person who entertains this kind of wrong attachment may want to make his body tough and durable. He claims that form, which is comprised of the four elements, is simply himself. **Or he may see himself as perfectly encompassing all worlds and say that he contains form.** He may see that his own nature is perfectly fused and unobstructed, and that all worlds in the ten directions are contained in it. Therefore, he says that he contains form. What kind of form? He says, "I have an immense form." **Or he may perceive all external conditions as contingent upon himself and say that form belongs to him.** He may say that external conditions follow him everywhere, and that the four elements of form all belong to him. Or he may decide that he relies on the continuity of the formations skandha and say that he is within form.

Sutra:

"In all of these speculations, he says that forms exist after death. Expanding the idea, he comes up with sixteen cases of the existence of forms.

Commentary:

In all of these speculations, he says that forms exist after death. In the above discussion about form and external conditions, there were four theories. He said:

1. The four elements of form belong to him;
2. The four elements of form are himself;
3. Form is within himself, so that he is big and form is small; and
4. Apart from him, there is no form.

In general, his talk is nonsense. There is no logic in it In these four theories, he speculates that there is existence after death.

Expanding the idea, he comes up with sixteen cases of the existence of forms. He takes the above four theories and applies them to the four skandhas of form, feeling, thinking, and formations, thus obtaining sixteen cases of the existence of forms. Another way to formulate the sixteen cases is to combine the four skandhas of form, feeling, thinking, and formations and the four elements of earth, water, fire, and air. It's useless to ask him how he came up with these views, because there is basically no logic in them. They don't make any sense. I cannot figure them out myself, because they are unclear to begin with.

Sutra:

"Then he may speculate that afflictions are always afflictions, and Bodhi is always Bodhi, and the two exist side by side without contradicting each other.

Commentary:

Four times four makes sixteen ways in which forms can exist. He sees that the four theories can be applied to each of the four skandhas of form, feeling, thinking and formations, or to the four elements of earth, water, fire and air. **Then he may speculate that afflictions are always afflictions, and Bodhi is always Bodhi.** He says that afflictions are afflictions forever, and Bodhi is Bodhi forever, and that the statement, "Afflictions are simply Bodhi" is wrong. **And the two exist side by side without contradicting each other.** He claims that these two function side by side without disrupting each other, that they are mutually cooperative. But this

idea is fundamentally wrong. It's basically impossible. why does he talk like this then? Because he is confused about Bodhi.

K3 Concludes that it is an externalist teaching.

Sutra:

"Because of these speculations about what exists after death, he will fall into externalism and become confused about the Bodhi nature. This is the sixth external teaching, which postulates confused theories of the existence of forms after death in the realm of the five skandhas.

Commentary:

The four skandhas of form, feeling, thinking, and formations are multiplied by four to generate sixteen cases for the existence of forms. He says that forms exist after death, and so because of these speculations about what exists after death, he will fall into externalism and become confused about the Bodhi nature, his inherent enlightened nature.

This is the sixth external teaching, which postulates confused theories of the existence of forms after death in the realm of the five skandhas. "The five skandhas" here actually refers only to the four skandhas of form, feeling, thinking, and formations, and not to consciousness. He says that after people die, they continue to have form and appearance. In his disoriented state of mind, he invents this kind of theory.

J7 Eight ideas about the non-existence of form.
K1 Describes the source and shows the error.

Sutra:

"Further, in his practice of samadhi, the good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper, and can no longer be disturbed by demons. He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. But if he begins to speculate on the skandhas of form, feeling, and thinking, which have

already ended, he could fall into error with the confused idea that forms do not exist after death.

Commentary:

Further, in his practice of samadhi, the good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper. This refers to any person who cultivates samadhi power. He has solid samadhi and wisdom, **and can no longer be disturbed by demons.** Although his wisdom is not ultimate and true wisdom, the demon kings cannot do anything to him. However, he is not yet able to subdue the demons of his own mind. **He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all** twelve **categories of** living **beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation.** He looks into the fundamental nature of all living beings, which is elusive, light and ephemeral and characterized by subtle movements.

But if he begins to speculate on the three **skandhas of form, feeling, and thinking, which have already ended, he could fall into error with the confused idea that forms do not exist after death.** He says that there is no existence after death. That's the kind of upside-down theory that he comes up with.

K2 Detailed explanation of their appearance.

Sutra:

"Seeing that his form is gone, his physical shape seems to lack a cause. As he contemplates the absence of thought, there is nothing to which his mind can become attached. Knowing that his feelings are gone, he has no further involvements. Those skandhas have vanished. Although there is still some coming into being, there is no feeling or thought, and he concludes that he is like grass or wood.

Commentary:

Seeing that his form skandha **is gone, his physical shape seems to lack a cause.** His body has no support. It's been given away. **As he contemplates the absence of thought, there is nothing to which his mind can become attached.** He has broken

through the thinking skandha, and it is gone. There is no place left for his mind to get hung up. He has no more false thinking. **Knowing that his feelings are gone –** that his feeling skandha is gone, **he has no further involvements** with external conditions. **Those** three **skandhas** of form, feeling, and thinking **have vanished. Although there is still some** very small trace **of coming into being,** that is, although the formations skandha still exists, **there is no feeling or thought, and he concludes that he is like grass or wood.** Since he's devoid of feeling and thinking, he considers himself to be the same as grass and wood.

Sutra:

"Since those qualities do not exist at present how can there be any existence of forms after death? Because of his examinations and comparisons, he decides that after death there is no existence. Expanding the idea, he comes up with eight cases of the nonexistence of forms.

Commentary:

Since those qualities do not exist at present. "Qualities" refers not only to form, but to mind as well. He says that the material aspects of form and mind are gone now. This is referring to the four skandhas of form, feeling, thinking, and formations. Remember that he says his body is like grass or wood. That means he doesn't have any awareness. Although he is alive, there's nothing at all. **How can there be any existence of forms after death?** if he cannot find any sign of existence, anything with actual form and appearance, right now in his living state, how could there be anything with form after he dies?

Because of his examinations and comparisons, he decides that after death, there is no existence. He mulls over the idea, looking at it from all angles. "If there are no forms in life, how can there be any after death? There are no forms after death either." If there is no evidence of the skandhas of form, feeling, thinking, and formations while he is alive, then there shouldn't be any evidence of them after death either. Expanding the idea, he comes up with

eight cases of the nonexistence of form. There are four cases of the nonexistence of the skandhas of form, feeling, thinking, and formations during life, and four cases of their nonexistence after death. They are all gone.

Sutra:

“From that, he may speculate that Nirvana and cause and effect are all empty, that they are mere names and ultimately do not exist.

Commentary:

From that, because he reasons that the four skandhas do not exist, based on the eight cases of nonexistence **he may speculate that Nirvana and cause and effect are all empty.** He says that there is no Nirvana, and he denies cause and effect. If it were really that way, there would be no reason for people to cultivate or become Buddhas. Why? According to his theories, there isn’t anything at all. He thinks **that they are mere names and ultimately do not exist.** They are nothing but names; they do not really exist. That’s what he says.

K3 Concludes that it is an externalist teaching.

Sutra:

“Because of those speculations that forms do not exist after death, he will fall into externalism and become confused about the Bodhi nature. This is the seventh external teaching, which postulates confused theories of the nonexistence of forms after death in the realm of the five skandhas.

Commentary:

He says that after death, there isn’t anything at all. Every-thing is empty. Because of those speculations that forms do not exist after death, he will fall into a kind of externalism and become confused about the Bodhi nature. This is the seventh external teaching, which postulates confused theories of the nonexistence of forms after death in the realm of the five skandhas. He says that there is no

existence after death within the five skandhas. That's the sort of distorted theory that his mind comes up with.

J8 Eight kinds of negation.

K1 Describes the source and shows the error.

Sutra:

"Further, in his practice of samadhi, the good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. In this state where the skandha of formations remains, but the skandhas of feeling and thinking are gone, if he begins to speculate that there is both existence and nonexistence, thus contradicting himself, he could fall into error with confused theories that deny both existence and nonexistence after death.

Commentary:

Further, in his practice of samadhi, the good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. Again, this refers to any good person who cultivates his samadhi power, making it strong and solid. Although external demons cannot get at him, the demons of his own mind are difficult to subdue. **He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all** twelve **categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation.** He observes the mind which is elusive and fleeting. At this point there are still subtle movements in the formations skandha.

In this state where the skandha of formations remains, but the skandhas of feeling and thinking are gone, if he begins' to speculate that there is both existence and nonexistence, if he says that things both exist and do not exist, **thus contradicting himself…** His own "self" is obliterated. It no longer exists. If you were to say that things exist then he would also exist. If you say things don't exist, then he doesn't exist either. when he contradicts himself, he is also destroying himself. He denies his own theories.

He could fall into error with confused theories that deny both existence and nonexistence after death. He says that after he dies, there is neither existence nor nonexistence. Then what is there? Is "neither existence nor nonexistence" the Middle Way? No. He has no regard for the Middle Way, nor has he attained the Middle Way. This is where he has gone wrong and become confused.

K2 Detailed explanation of their appearance.

Sutra:

"Regarding form, feeling, and thinking, he sees that existence is not really existence. Within the flow of the formations skandha, he sees that nonexistence is not really nonexistence.

Commentary:

Regarding form, feeling, and thinking, the three skandhas that he has already broken through, **he sees that existence is not really existence.** He perceives a state of existence, and yet it is not really existence. Within the flow of the formations skandha, he sees that nonexistence is not really nonexistence. Within the subtle fluctuation of the skandha of formations, he sees that what does not exist also seems to exist. Therefore, there is neither existence nor nonexistence. He formulates this kind of theory.

Sutra:

"Considering back and forth in this way, he thoroughly investigates the realms of these skandhas and derives an eightfold negation of forms. No matter which skandha is mentioned, he says that after death, it neither exists nor does not exist.

Commentary:

Earlier he saw a situation in which the previously existing form, feeling, and thinking became nonexistent, and the flowing of the formations skandha, which could later cease to exist, was still

existing then. **Considering back and forth in this way,** he investigates this way and that trying to discover the underlying principle. **He thoroughly investigates the realms of these** four **skandhas** of form, feeling, thinking and formations, viewing them from all angles, **and derives an eightfold negation of forms.** There are eight cases, all of which deny the existence of forms. **No matter which skandha is mentioned,** he only has one answer **– he says that after death, it neither exists nor does not exist.** He says that after death, the skandhas of form, feeling, thinking, and formations are neither existing nor nonexistent.

Sutra:

"Further, because he speculates that all formations are changing in nature, an 'insight' flashes through his mind, leading him to deny both existence and nonexistence. He cannot determine what is unreal and what is real.

Commentary:

Further, because he speculates that all formations are changing in nature… He further investigates the nature of the formations skandha. Because the formations skandha has subtle movements, it is ever flowing and changing. Then **an "insight" flashes through his mind, leading him to deny both existence and nonexistence.** A mistaken insight occurs to him, and he decides that existence and nonexistence are both invalid. Is this the Middle Way? No, he doesn't understand the ultimate meaning of the Middle Way. That's why he has no regard for the Middle Way. He only considers existence and nonexistence. So **he cannot determine what is unreal and what is real.** Things are neither unreal nor real. You say something is real, but he denies it. You say it's unreal, but he denies that too. Since he maintains that it's neither real nor unreal, he is at a loss.

K3 Concludes that it is an externalist teaching.

Sutra:

“Because of these speculations that deny both existence and nonexistence after death, the future is murky to him and he cannot say anything about it. Therefore, he will fall into externalism and become confused about the Bodhi nature. This is the eighth external teaching, which postulates confused theories that deny both existence and nonexistence after death in the realm of the five skandhas.

Commentary:

Because of these various **speculations** which he made above **that deny both existence and nonexistence after death, the future is murky to him and he cannot say anything about it.** He says that after death there is both existence and nonexistence. He cannot perceive the future end of the formations skandha. Since he cannot know it, there is nothing he can discuss, nothing he can say. **Therefore, he will fall into externalism** by following an external teaching, **and** he will **become confused about the** fundamental **Bodhi nature. This is the eighth external teaching, which postulates confused theories that deny both existence and nonexistence after death in the realm of the five skandhas.** He says that after one dies, there is existence and yet no existence in the realm of the five skandhas. Because Ms mind is utterly confused, he arrives at this kind of theory.

J9 Seven theories on the cessation of existence.
K1 Describes the source and shows the error.

Sutra:

“Further, in his practice of samadhi, the good person’s mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. But if he begins to speculate

that there is no existence after death, he could fall into error with seven theories of the cessation of existence.

Commentary:

Further, in his practice of samadhi, the good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. The good person who cultivates samadhi has developed solid samadhi power and a proper mind, so the demons have no way to bother him.

He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all twelve categories of living **beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation.** He contemplates their hidden, light, and ephemeral nature. At this point, there are subtle fluctuations in the formations skandha. **But if,** since he cannot perceive any state beyond the formations skandha, **he begins to speculate that there is no existence after death, he could fall into error with seven theories of the cessation of existence.** This person could come to believe in seven kinds of cessation.

K2 Detailed explanation of their appearance.

Sutra:

"He may speculate that the body will cease to exist or that when desire has ended, there is cessation of existence; or that after suffering has ended, there is cessation of existence; or that when bliss reaches an ultimate point, there is cessation of existence; or that when renunciation reaches an ultimate point there is cessation of existence.

Commentary:

He may speculate that the body will cease to exist. He contemplates that in all places where living beings have bodies, their bodies will eventually perish. These places are the Four Great Continents – Jambudvipa in the south, Purvavideha in the east, Aparagodaniya in the west and Uttarakuru in the north – and also the Six Desire Heavens.

Or he may surmise **that when desire has ended –** beyond the Desire Realm, in the heavens of the First Dhyana (of the Pour Dhyanas), known as the Ground of the Happiness of Leaving Birth **– there is cessation of existence.** In the First Dhyana, you separate from the defilements of living beings and experience joy. **Or that after suffering has ended,** in the heavens of the Second Dhyana, known as the Ground of the Joy of Developing Samadhi, **there is cessation of existence.** At this point, you feel joy because you have attained samadhi.

Or that when bliss reaches an ultimate point, there is cessation of existence. He may speculate that the state of ultimate bliss in the heavens of the Third Dhyana will also come to an end. The Third Dhyana is called the Ground of the Wonderful Bliss of Leaving Joy, because one transcends happiness and experiences a subtle bliss. He surmises that the Third Dhyana heavens will also cease to be. **Or** he judges **that when renunciation reaches an ultimate point –** in the heavens of the Fourth Dhyana, known as the Ground of the Purity of Renouncing Thought **– there is cessation of existence.** He surmises that the heavens of the Pour Stations of Emptiness, in which there is no hindrance of form, will also cease to be.

The time passes by very quickly. Without our realizing it, the summer is already over. In China, Confucius compared life to a ceaselessly flowing stream. Time that has gone by can never return. Someone also said, “An inch of time is worth an ounce of gold, but an ounce of gold can hardly buy back an inch of time.” An inch of time is as valuable as an ounce of gold. If you lose gold, it’s possible to recover it. Once time has gone by, however, there is no way to get it back. Therefore, time is even more valuable than gold. Thus, in Buddhism we say, “An inch of time is an inch of life.” When time grows short, one’s life is also shorter. We must certainly cherish our time and not casually let it go by in vain.

During this summer, we have begun our days at six o’clock in the morning, either meditating or studying the Sutras. From early in

the morning until nine o'clock at night every person has applied himself or herself diligently to cultivation. I believe that this period has been more precious than gold, more valuable than diamonds. Everyone has been together, being permeated and influenced by what we have heard and cultivated. This is a most precious and valuable time in our lives. It's a pity that the time has passed by in the twinkling of an eye. Although it is nearly over, the Buddhadharma that each of us has learned has planted a precious Vajra seed in our mind, in the field of our eighth consciousness. In the future it will certainly bear the indestructible fruit of Vajra, which is also the Buddha-fruit-we will become Buddhas.

When will we become Buddhas? It depends on our how diligently we till and irrigate the fields. The seed has been planted in the ground, but just as in farming, we have to water it, pull the weeds, and till the soil, making it soft so that the seed can sprout. How do we pull the weeds out? Weeding means that at all times, we must guard against the arising of very subtle thoughts and get rid of all false thoughts.

Every day we must apply effort in our cultivation in this way, just as farmers tend and irrigate their fields. Give it some water and pull out the weeds, day by day, and the Vajra seed you have planted in the ground will produce a Bodhi sprout. After your Bodhi sprout comes up and grows into a Bodhi tree, it will bear the Bodhi fruit. But you have to protect that Bodhi sprout. If you neglect to water it and tend to it, then it will wither away. What is meant by watering? if you study the Buddhadharma every day, you are irrigating your Bodhi sprout with the water of the Dharma, and in time, your Vajra fruit will ripen. If you don't continue to care for this Vajra seed after the session is over, then it will not be easy for to sprout. You must protect your Vajra seed well. Don't go back to doing the things you used to like doing. Follow the rules and behave yourselves. Don't be as wild and reckless as you used to be. If you follow the rules, then you are in accord with the Buddhadharma. If you don't then you are not. We should certainly abide by the rules and regulations.

Don’t be so lax and unrestrained. This is my hope for each one of you.

During this summer session of lectures on the *Shurangama Sutra*, it has surely been the case that, “Once it enters your ears, it is forever a seed of the Way.” As soon as the principles of this Sutra pass through your ears, they remain forever in the field of your eight consciousness as seeds of Bodhi.

Sutra:

“Considering back and forth in this way, he exhaustively investigates the limits of the seven states and sees that they have already ceased to be and will not exist again.

Commentary:

Considering back and forth in this way, he exhaustively investigates the limits of the seven states mentioned above **and sees that they have already ceased to be and will not exist again.** They don’t seem to exist at present and since they are already gone, they will not come into being again. These are the seven kinds of cessation of existence.

K3 Concludes that it is an externalist teaching.

Sutra:

“Because of these speculations that existence ceases after death, he will fall into externalism and become confused about the Bodhi nature. This is the ninth external teaching, which postulates confused theories of the cessation of existence after death in the realm of the five skandhas.

Commentary:

Because of these speculations that existence ceases after death, in whit he maintains that there is nothing what-so-ever after death, that everything is annihilated, **he will fall into externalism and become confused about the Bodhi nature,** about the nature of Proper Enlightenment. **This is the ninth external teaching, which postulates confused theories of the cessation of existence**

after death in the realm of the five skandhas. In his confused mind, he thinks that existence ceases after death in the realm of form, feeling, thinking, and formations.

J10 Five kinds of immediate Nirvana.
K1 Describes the source and shows the error.

Sutra:

"Further, in his practice of samadhi, the good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. But if he begins to speculate on existence after death, he could fall into error with five theories of Nirvana.

Commentary:

Further, in his practice of samadhi, the good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. Since he has solid samadhi power and a pure and proper mind, the demon kings cannot affect him in any way.

He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all twelve **categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation.** He examines their mind, which is hidden, light, and clear and in which there is a subtle fluctuation. **But if he begins to speculate on existence after death, he could fall into error with five theories of Nirvana.** Beyond the formations skandha, he perceives existence again. Based on the constant, ceaseless fluctuations in the formations skandha, he makes false conjectures of existence and comes to believe in five theories regarding Nirvana.

K2 Detailed explanation of their appearance.

Sutra:

"He may consider the heavens of the Desire Realm a true refuge, because he contemplates their extensive brightness and

longs for it; or he may take refuge in the First Dhyana, because there his nature is free from worry; or he may take refuge in the Second Dhyana, because there his mind is free from suffering; or he may take refuge in the Third Dhyana, because he delights in its extreme joy; or he may take refuge in the Fourth Dhyana, reasoning that suffering and bliss are both ended there and that he will no longer undergo transmigration.

Commentary:

He may consider the heavens of the Desire Realm a true refuge. That's where he will go. He considers the heavens of the Desire Realm to be his refuge. Why? **Because he contemplates their extensive brightness and longs for it.** The heavens of the Desire Realm appear to be perfect and brilliant, so he gets attached to them and yearns to go there. He takes them as his haven, as the state of Nirvana. He thinks the Desire Realm is a place of true happiness.

Or he may take refuge in the First Dhyana, because there his nature is free from worry. He may think that the beings in the heavens of the First Dhyana, the Ground of the Joy of Leaving Birth, have left behind the worries and afflictions of living beings and experience a sense of joy. Thus he wishes to be born there. **Or he may take refuge in the Second Dhyana, because there his mind is free from suffering.** In his cultivation, he may reach the heavens of the Second Dhyana, where his mind no longer suffers, because he has developed samadhi. These heavens are known as the Ground of the Joy of Developing Samadhi.

Or he may take refuge in the Third Dhyana, because he delights in its extreme bliss. He may believe that the bliss of the Third Dhyana is extremely fine. He thinks he will get whatever he wishes for there, so he considers those heavens to be a state of Nirvana. **Or he may take refuge in the Fourth Dhyana, reasoning that suffering and bliss are both ended there and that he will no longer undergo transmigration.** He may say that in the Fourth Dhyana, the Ground of the Purity of Renouncing Thought

suffering and bliss are both gone and so there is no further rebirth in the Three Realms. Since it is extremely pure, he considers it a state of Nirvana and wants to take refuge there.

Sutra:

"These heavens are subject to outflows, but in his confusion he thinks that they are unconditioned; and he takes these five states of tranquility to be refuges of supreme purity. Considering back and forth in this way, he decides that these five states are ultimate.

Commentary:

These heavens are subject to outflows, but in his confusion he "mistakes a thief for his own son" and **thinks that they are unconditioned; and he takes these five states of tranquility to be refuges of supreme purity.** He feels that these five states are peaceful and secure, and that they are especially supreme and pure places of refuge. **Considering back and forth in this way,** going round and round, **he decides that these five states are ultimate.** He reckons they are all ultimate states where he can attain Nirvana. He does not realize that these heavens are still subject to outflows.

K3 Concludes that it is an externalist teaching.

Sutra:

"Because of these speculations about five kinds of immediate Nirvana, he will fall into externalism and become confused about the Bodhi nature. This is the tenth external teaching, which postulates confused theories of five kinds of immediate Nirvana in the realm of the five skandhas.

Commentary:

Because of these five **speculations** described above **about five kinds of immediate Nirvana, he will fall into externalism and become confused about the Bodhi nature.** He loses sight of the enlightened nature of Bodhi. **This is the tenth external teaching, which postulates confused theories of five kinds of immediate**

Nirvana in the realm of the five skandhas. His theories are incorrect and upside-down.

I3 Conclusion on the harm, and command to offer protection.
J1 Showing how this happens due to interaction.

Sutra:

"Ananda, all ten of these crazy explanations may occur in dhyana as one's mental effort interacts with the formations skandha. That is why these 'insights' appear.

Commentary:

Ananda, all ten of these crazy, erroneous **explanations** discussed above **may occur in dhyana,** the "stilling of thought," **as one's mental effort interacts with the formations skandha.** What is the problem here? Before you have broken through the formations skandha, your cultivation of samadhi interacts and battles with the formations skandha. If your own proper knowledge and proper views are victorious, you can leap over this hurdle. If the formations skandha wins, then you become possessed by a demon. **That is why these** crazy **'insights'** and crazy explanations **appear.**

J2 Confusion will bring harm.

Sutra:

"Dull and confused living beings do not evaluate themselves. Encountering such situations, they mistake their confusion for understanding and say that they have become sages, thereby uttering a great lie. They will fall into the Relentless Hells.

Commentary:

Dull and confused living beings do not evaluate themselves. Living beings are stubborn, muddled, and unaware. They fail to reflect on who they are and what kind of disposition they have. **Encountering such situations,** when such states arise, they are confused, but because they don't have the guidance of a wise teacher who has clear vision, **they mistake their confusion for**

understanding and say that they have become sages. They claim they have become enlightened and become Buddhas, **thereby uttering a great lie.** Because they tell such an outrageous lie, **they will** definitely **fall into the Relentless Hells.**

J3 Command to offer protection.

Sutra:

"After my Nirvana, all of you should pass on the Tathagata's teachings, transmitting and revealing them to those in the Dharma-ending Age, so that living beings everywhere can awaken to these truths. Do not let demons arise in their minds and cause them to commit grave offenses. Offer protection so that wrong views will be eradicated.

Commentary:

After my Nirvana in the future, Ananda and **all of you** in the great assembly **should pass on the Tathagata's teachings,** the words I have spoken, **transmitting and revealing them to those** living beings **in the Dharma-ending Age, so that living beings everywhere can awaken to these truths.** You should cause all living beings to understand these principles. **Do not let demons arise in their minds and cause them to commit grave offenses.** Don't let people create their own bad karma in this way. **Offer protection so that wrong views will be eradicated.** Maintain and support the Buddhadharma, and put an end to wrong views.

Sutra:

"Teach them to awaken to true principles in body and mind, so that they do not stray off the Unsurpassed Path. Do not let them aspire to and be content with small attainments. You should become kings of great enlightenment and serve as guides of purity.

Commentary:

Teach them to awaken to true principles in body and mind. Help living beings in the Dharma-ending Age to understand the real

and ultimate doctrine in body and mind, **so that they do not stray off the Unsurpassed Path.** Don’t let them chase after superficial dharmas and fail to seek the fundamental Dharma. When living beings meet a fork in the road, they will not know which branch to take. **Do not let them aspire to and be content with small attainments.** Don’t allow those who aspire to the Unsurpassed Path of Enlightenment to become complacent and satisfied with attaining a little. **You should become kings of great enlightenment and serve as guides of purity.** Be pure models and pure leaders. Do not be content with small attainments. Instead you should increase your efforts and advance.

CHAPTER 6

The Consciousness Skandha

H5 The characteristics of the demons of the consciousness skandha.
I1 Overview of the beginning and the end.
J1 In the beginning, one cultivates but has not yet broken through this region.
K1 Review of the ending of the previous formations skandha.

Sutra:

"Ananda, when that good person, in cultivating samadhi, has put an end to the formations skandha, the subtle, fleeting fluctuations – the deep, imperceptible, pivotal source and the common foundation from which all life in the world springs – are suddenly obliterated. In the submerged network of the retributive karma of the pudgala, the karmic resonances are interrupted.

Commentary:

Ananda, when that good person who is cultivating in the formations skandha, **in cultivating samadhi, has put an end to the formations skandha, the subtle, fleeting fluctuations – the deep, imperceptible, pivotal source and the common foundation from which all life in the world springs – are suddenly obliterated.** Those imperceptible, subtle movements, which characterize all the twelve categories of beings in the world and are the common source of their births, are suddenly wiped out. In

Chinese, the characters for "pivotal source" literally mean the large rope that forms the border of a net, or they can mean buttons and fastenings in clothing. They can also refer to the central point or axis.

Pudgala is a Sanskrit word translated as "that which goes on to repeated reincarnations," that which is born over and over again. It is also called "body while in a state of existence," and also "sentient being." Every sentient being is endowed with a "body while in a state of existence." When we die, we will have what is called "the body that exists while in between skandhas."

In the submerged network of the retributive karma of the pudgala, the bodies while in a state of existence, **the karmic resonances are interrupted.** In this interactive process of the mutual repayment of karma which runs very deep, cause and effect are suspended. "Karmic resonances" refers to cause and effect. Since the formations skandha has ceased, and birth and death have come to an end, cause and effect have been arrested. This is describing the end of the formations skandha and the beginning of the consciousness skandha.

K2 Introduction to the region of the consciousness skandha.

Sutra:

"There is about to be a great illumination in the sky of Nirvana. It is like gazing east at the cock's final crow to see the light of dawn. The six sense faculties are empty and still; there is no further racing about. Inside and outside there is a profound brightness. He enters without entering. Fathoming the source of life of the twelve categories of beings throughout the ten directions, he can contemplate that source without being drawn into any of the categories. He has become identical with the realms of the ten directions. The light does not fade, and what was hidden before is now revealed. This is the region of the consciousness skandha.

Commentary:

There is about to be a great illumination in the sky of Nirvana of the inherent nature. He's on the verge of a great awakening. He is about to get enlightened. By analogy, **it is like gazing east at the cock's final crow to see the light of dawn.** When the cock crows for the first and second time to announce the dawn, there is still no light in the east. The sky is still dark. But if you gaze eastward when the cock crows for the third and final time, you will see the first light of the day.

The six sense faculties are empty and still. The feeling skandha has ended, so the sense faculties no longer perceive. They are "empty." The thinking skandha has ended, so there is no more false thinking. Thus it is "still." At this point, there is no more feeling and no more false thoughts causing the mind to run about. **There is no further racing about.** That means the shifting and flowing of the formations skandha have also ceased. The fluctuations of the formations skandha had been like ceaseless ripples, but now they have subsided, and there is no more running about.

Inside and outside there is a profound brightness. At this point when only the consciousness skandha remains to be broken through, there is a brilliant light both inside and out. **He enters without entering,** because the functions of the sense faculties and sense objects have been severed. The six sense faculties and six objects have united, and there are no longer any faculties or any objects. There is no further pairing between faculty and object. They are non-dual. The six faculties and six objects are no longer differentiated, so there is no flow for him to enter.

Fathoming the source of life of the twelve categories of beings throughout the ten directions, he can contemplate that source without being drawn into any of the categories. He penetrates deeply to the primal life-source of the twelve categories of beings. He can reflect upon this source without being attracted to any of the twelve categories of beings. They have no sway over him. He has no further involvement with the twelve categories of

beings. **He has become identical with the realms of the ten directions.** He is experiencing identity in substance with all realms everywhere. **The light does not fade.** This bright wisdom does not disappear, **and what was hidden before is now revealed.** The most secret and imperceptible states now become manifest. **This** state **is the region of the consciousness skandha.** It falls within the scope of the consciousness skandha.

J2 Ultimately it breaks up and reveals its false source.

Sutra:

"If he has become identical with the beckoning masses, he may obliterate the individuality of the six gates and succeed in uniting and opening them. Seeing and hearing become linked so that they function interchangeably and purely. The worlds of the ten directions and his own body and mind are as bright and transparent as Vaidurya. This is the end of the consciousness skandha. This person can then transcend the turbidity of life spans. Contemplating the cause of the consciousness skandha, one sees that the negation of existence and the negation of nonexistence are both unreal, and that upside-down false thoughts are its source.

Commentary:

If he has become identical with the beckoning masses… Having severed connections of cause and effect with the twelve categories of living beings, he has become identical with them. However, he is not influenced by them. Since he has cut off all interaction with them, he is no longer reborn among them.

He may obliterate the individuality of the six gates. At this point, the entrances of the six sense faculties no longer function. They have been smelted. In what way do they no longer function? This does not mean that the eyes cannot see, the ears cannot hear, the nose cannot smell, or the tongue cannot taste. Rather, what happens is that the six faculties function interchangeably. If you break through the formations skandha, then you will experience

this state. The eyes can still see, but they can also speak and eat. The ear, which could only hear before, can now see as well. You can also see with your nose and your mouth. Each sense faculty is capable of all six functions. That's what obliterating the individuality of the six gates means. The former signs of defilement are now gone.

And he may **succeed in uniting and opening them.** "Uniting" means the six sense faculties unite to become one. "Opening" means each faculty has the functions of all six. **Seeing and hearing become linked.** There is communication between them. They can help each other out just like neighbors who show mutual concern for each other. The six faculties are linked **so that they function interchangeably and purely.** Isn't that wonderful? This state is really sublime.

The worlds of the ten directions and his own body and mind are as bright and transparent as Vaidurya. They are like that exquisite blue gem, which is so clear as to be transparent. **This is the end of the consciousness skandha.** When you reach this level you have put an end to the consciousness skandha, and so all five skandhas are gone. But before you reach this level, the consciousness skandha has not ended.

This person can then transcend the turbidity of life spans. Contemplating the cause of the consciousness skandha, one sees that the negation of existence and the negation of nonexistence are both unreal, and that upside-down false thoughts are its source. Questions of existence and nonexistence are elusive and intangible. Such upside-down false thoughts are the basis of the states that he attains.

I2 Ten attachments within this.
J1 Attachment to causes and that which is caused.
K1 When formations are gone, consciousness appears.

Sutra:

"Ananda, you should know that the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty, and he must

return consciousness to the source. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Commentary:

Ananda, you should know that the good person who cultivates samadhi **has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty.** Although he encountered so many demonic states, whether they were caused by demons from the heavens, demons of his own mind, or other kinds of demons, they did not sway his samadhi. Or it could have been that when he was cultivating samadhi, he didn't experience any demonic states at all. Or maybe when he encountered demonic states, he recognized them and did not become confused by them. Once he pierced through the confusion, the formations skandha was destroyed. Now he' is at the beginning of the consciousness skandha. He has already fathomed the formations skandha and seen it as empty, **and he must return consciousness to the source.** Now he has to break through the consciousness skandha, and when he does, he will return to the source, to the Treasury of the Tathagata. **He has already ended** the states of **production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.** He has yet to perfectly realize the nature of ultimate serenity.

K2 A wrong understanding leads to a mistake.

Sutra:

"He can cause the individual sense faculties of his body to unite and open. He also has a pervasive awareness of all the categories of beings in the ten directions. Since his awareness is pervasive, he can enter the perfect source. But if he regards what he is returning to as the cause of true permanence and interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of holding to that cause. Kapila the Sankhyan, with his theory of returning to the Truth of the Unmanifest, will become his companion. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

Commentary:

He can cause the individual sense faculties of his body to unite and open. Now in the consciousness skandha, he has a false mental attachment. He is at the point where he "has not yet perfected the subtle wonders of ultimate serenity," but he can make his six sense faculties function inter-changeably. Each sense faculty has the abilities of all six. His eyes can talk and hear. His ears can eat and smell. The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind can function interchangeably to perceive sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and objects of touch.

You may think that ears cannot eat but when one attains the interchangeable functioning of the six faculties, they can. "Where are their teeth?" you wonder. Ask your ears. They don't eat things the way we do, anyway. When they start to eat they may just naturally grow teeth, and their teeth, will not fall out. Perhaps they don't even use teeth. Or perhaps the teeth appear when they need them. This is the true ability of science. Each faculty has six functions.

"Unite" refers to how the six faculties join to become one faculty. "Open" refers to how one faculty opens up to have the functions of all six. Would you say these are spiritual powers? Is this science? No matter how much research scientists do, even if they can transplant human hearts, livers and other parts of the body, they cannot enable each sense faculty to have the functions of all six. That's something science cannot achieve. No matter how advanced science becomes, I don't think it will ever have that capability. If you develop science in your own nature, then you can have this kind of function.

He also has a pervasive awareness of all the categories of beings in the ten directions. Not only does he have the ability to unite and open his six sense faculties to function interchangeably, he also knows what is going on with all twelve categories of beings throughout the ten directions. He and other beings share a mutual awareness. **Since his awareness is pervasive,** he can know the

dispositions of all beings in the ten directions, and **he can enter the perfect source,** the perfection of the original nature.

But if he regards what he is returning to as a cause of true permanence… Suppose he becomes wrongly attached to the place of his return. What is his attachment? He says that it is true permanence **and interprets this as a supreme state**. Since he believes it to be true permanence, he interprets this as a kind of supreme liberation and supreme view. If he didn't hold such a view, there would be no problem. But as soon as he holds this view, **he will fall into the error of holding to that cause.** He takes true permanence as the cause, but this is completely wrong. He thinks that place is characterized by true permanence. Actually he is still within consciousness, which is not true permanence. He becomes attached to a cause and what that cause pertains to. In fact this is not the cause, but he regards it as the cause. By attaching to it, he joins an external sect. He does business with them. He puts his investments there and forms a company. With what external sect does he get involved?

Kapila the Sankhyan, with his theory of returning to the Truth of the Unmanifest, will become his companion. Kapila founded the "religion of the yellow-haired." Earlier, we mentioned that the teacher of Matangi used a mantra of the Kapila religion, a mantra which came from the Brahma Heaven. The Truth of the Unmanifest postulates that there is nothing at all, that everything is transformed from the current state of the eighth consciousness. This religion teaches that all things are born from the Truth of the Unmanifest. Once this cultivator becomes attached to this cause, he becomes friends with those of the "yellow-haired external sect." He incorporates with them, and it is not known when that corporation will ever end. Is it limited or unlimited?

Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, the Way of Enlightenment, **he will lose his knowledge and understanding.** He takes what is not a cause to be a cause. He shouldn't have set up this cause, but he did. Because he wrongly established that cause

and what it pertains to, he no longer has true wisdom. He has lost it. Where did it go? If you want to help him look for it you will lose yours, too.

K3 Giving the name and instructions to awaken.

Sutra:

"This is the first state, in which he concludes that there is a place to which to return, based on the idea that there is something to attain. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds of externalism.

Commentary:

This is the first state, in which he concludes that there is a place to which to return, based on the idea that there is something to attain. His principle is wrong. In what way? **He strays far from perfect penetration.** What he does is completely opposed to "cultivating the perfect penetration of the ear organ by directing the hearing inward to listen to the inherent nature, thereby entering the flow and forgetting the source." Why? Because he has developed an attachment. **And** he **turns his back on the City of Nirvana.** What is this great city of Nirvana? It's where the four virtues of Nirvana-permanence, bliss, true self, and purity-are found. **Thus** he is **sowing the seeds of externalism.** By postulating a nonexistent cause, he becomes attached to an external teaching. Since his premise is like the Truth of the Unmanifest of the Kapila religion, he makes friends with its adherents and joins their ranks.

J2 Attachment to an ability that is not actually an ability.
K1 When formations are gone, consciousness appears.

Sutra:

"Further, Ananda, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Commentary:

Further, Ananda, the good person who is cultivating samadhi **has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty.** He has thoroughly investigated and put an end to the formations skandha; it is empty for him. **He has already ended** the states of **production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.** He has not completely attained the bliss of ultimate serenity, because consciousness has not been ended yet. Consciousness and True Suchness differ by only a little bit consciousness is subject to production and destruction, whereas True Suchness is not. Right now, the eighth consciousness, which still has tiny traces of production and destruction, joins with True Suchness, which is without production and destruction, and becomes what is called "the joined consciousness." Since the consciousness is in extremely close proximity to True Suchness, they merge to form the joined consciousness. Since it is still a "joined" consciousness, the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity has not been perfected.

K2 A wrong understanding leads to a mistake.

Sutra:

"He may regard that to which he is returning as his own body and may see all beings in the twelve categories throughout space as flowing forth from his body. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of maintaining that he has an ability which he does not really have. Maheshvara, who manifests his boundless body, will become his companion. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

Commentary:

He, the cultivator, **may regard that to which he is returning as his own body…** The place he is headed for is still within the production and destruction of the eighth consciousness. It is not actually his own body, but he thinks it is. **And** he has another false

attachment which is that **he may see all beings in the twelve categories –** from egg-born beings to beings not entirely lacking thought **– throughout space as flowing forth from his body.**

"Do you know where living beings come from?" he asks. "They all come from my own body. I gave birth to them all."

It is like an earlier state in which the cultivator said, "All beings are my children-even the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Arhats-I created them all. I can create Buddhas; I can create Bodhisattvas; and I can create Arhats." See what an egomaniac he is.

If he interprets this as a supreme state… He thinks it's supreme, but it really isn't. It's based on wrong knowledge and views and can hardly be called supreme. If it were truly supreme, it would accord with the Buddhadharma. So as you cultivate the Way and read the Sutras, make sure you understand them clearly. **He will fall into the error of maintaining that he has an ability which he does not really have.** He says he is able to create all living beings, but in fact he has no such ability. That's just a speculation he makes with his false consciousness. He doesn't really have the ability, but he becomes attached to the idea that he does.

Who has this kind of attachment?

It's the God **Maheshvara,** the Lord of the Heaven of Great Sovereignty, which is the highest heaven in the Form Realm. Maheshvara is also called the Great Sovereign God. He has three flesh eyes which he was born with, and he also has the Buddha-eye in the middle of his forehead

How many hands does he have? He has eight hands, four in front and four in back. The ones in front are good for picking things up, and the ones in back are handy for stealing things. Since one hand isn't enough, and two hands still aren't that powerful for picking up or stealing things, he has eight hands. He can pick up a lot of things, too. If he went into a department store, I'm sure the security officers who watch for shoplifters would have a hard time keeping an eye on him, because he has so many hands. He rides

upon a magnificent white ox and carries a white whisk in one hand. He travels around with the greatest freedom. He says, “Take a look at me. I’m utterly at ease. You’re nothing by comparison. I have total self-mastery.” That is why he’s called the Great Sovereign God.

The Great Sovereign God, **who manifests his boundless body, will become his companion.** This god is attached to the idea that he can manifest a boundless body, and he claims that all living beings are manifested by him. Now this person is cultivating the same Dharma-door. He has the same attachment. He says that all living beings are manifested by him. Tell me, how can someone who has not accomplished Buddhahood create living beings? This is a false attachment; he thinks he has an ability that he doesn’t really have. He makes friends with the Great Sovereign God and goes off to the Heaven of Great Sovereignty.

Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding. He fails to recognize the genuine enlightenment. He doesn’t have any genuine wisdom, and so he joins the demons of the heavens and the external sects.

K3 Giving its name and instructions to awaken.

Sutra:

“This is the second state, in which he draws conclusions about the workings of an ability based on idea that he has such an ability. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds for being born in the Heaven of Great Pride where the self is considered all-pervading and perfect.

Commentary:

This is the second state, in which he draws conclusions about the workings of an ability based on the idea that he has such an ability. Based on the idea that he is able to create living beings, he attains a fruition that seems all-pervasive and perfect. **He strays far from perfect penetration.** What he has done goes

against the Dharma-door of cultivating perfect penetration through the ear, of directing the hearing inward to listen to the inherent nature.

And he **turns his back on the City of Nirvana.** He also goes against the truth of the unproduced and undestroyed, **thus sowing the seeds for being born in the Heaven of Great Pride where the self is considered all-pervading and perfect.** He will eventually be reborn in the Heaven of Great Pride, which is the Heaven of Great Sovereignty.

Great pride means he looks down on everyone else. He is always up on his white ox, with his three eyes and eight arms, thinking he is quite marvelous. Riding freely about on his white ox, he feels smug and satisfied. Because he feels his lifestyle is so superb, he becomes arrogant. He claims, “I completely pervade everything, and I can accomplish everything.”

J3 Attachment to a wrong idea of permanence.
K1 When formations are gone, consciousness appears.

Sutra:

“Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Commentary:

Further, the good person, who in his cultivation of samadhi has destroyed the formations skandha, **has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has already ended the mind of production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.** He has not yet truly attained the bliss of ultimate serenity.

K2 A wrong understanding leads to a mistake.

Sutra:

“If he regards what he is returning to as a refuge, he will suspect that his body and mind come forth from there, and that all things throughout space in the ten directions arise from there as well. He will explain that place from which all things issue forth is the truly permanent body, which is not subject to production and destruction. While still within production and destruction, he prematurely reckons that he abides in permanence. Since he is deluded about non-production, he is also confused about production and destruction. He is sunk in confusion. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of taking what is not permanent to be permanent. He will speculate that the Sovereign God (Ishvaradeva) is his companion. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

Commentary:

If he regards what he is returning to as a refuge, there will be doubts in his mind and **he will suspect that his body and mind come forth from there.** The previous false conjecture was that he himself produced all living beings. Now he thinks that he came forth from the place to which he is returning, **and that all things throughout space in the ten directions arise from there as well.**

He will explain that that place from which all things issue forth is the truly permanent body, which is not subject to production and destruction. “That place” refers to the refuge to which he is returning. He claims that it is not caught up in production and destruction. Why does he say that? Because he is mistaken in his basic assumption.

While still within the consciousness that is subject to **production and destruction, he prematurely reckons that he abides in permanence.** He speculates that it is eternal and unchanging. **Since he is deluded about non-production, he is also**

confused about production and destruction. Since he doesn't understand the principle of non-production, he isn't dear about the principle of production and destruction, either. **He is sunk in confusion.** He becomes attached to the state and refuses to let go of it. He works on his cultivation right at that spot.

If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of taking what is not permanent to be permanent. If he considers it supreme, he is just adding attachments on top of attachments. He becomes attached to that permanence, but it is not true permanence. **He will speculate that the Sovereign God (Ishvaradeva) is his companion. Confused about the** nature of **Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding** and no longer have true wisdom.

K3 He gives it a name and warns us to be aware of it.

Sutra:

"This is the third state, in which he makes a false speculation based on the idea that there is a refuge. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana thus sowing the seeds of an distorted view of perfection.

Commentary:

This is the third state, in which he makes a false speculation based on the idea that there is a refuge. He establishes the idea that there is a refuge, and then makes false speculations about a false fruition. **He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds of an distorted view of perfection.** He turns away from the principle of perfect penetration and leaves it far behind, and he comes to hold a wrong view of perfection.

J4 Attachment to an awareness that is not actually awareness.
K1 When formations are gone, consciousness appears.

Sutra:

“Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Commentary:

Further, the good person has thoroughly investigated and **seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction.** He has destroyed the nature that is subject to production and destruction, **but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of** the bliss of **ultimate serenity.**

K2 A wrong understanding leads to a mistake.

Sutra:

“Based on his idea that there is universal awareness, he formulates a theory that all the plants in the ten directions are sentient, not different from human beings. He claims that plants can become people, and that when people die they again become plants in the ten directions. If he considers this idea of unrestricted, universal awareness to be supreme, he will fall into the error of maintaining that what is not aware has awareness. Vasishtha and Sainika, who maintained the idea of comprehensive awareness, will become his companions. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

Commentary:

Based on his idea that there is universal awareness, he formulates a theory. He deduces, from what he knows, that there is a universal awareness, and then formulates a view about it. What is his view? You’d never guess, and neither would I. He says **that**

all the plants in the ten directions are sentient. In China, there is a saying,

"People are not plants; who can be without emotion?"

That statement implies that plants are insentient. But here the cultivator has decided that all plants are sentient **not different from human beings.** They are the same as people in that they also have life. **He claims that plants can become people, and that when people die they again become plants in the ten directions.** After death, humans turn back into plants.

If he considers this idea of unrestricted, universal awareness to be supreme… He doesn't have the wisdom to selectively apply this theory of universal awareness. He tries to be special and mistakenly thinks his idea is a supreme one. **He will fall into the error of maintaining that what is not aware has awareness.** He claims to understand this principle, but actually he is ignorant. He does not understand, but insists that he does.

He is similar to two followers of external sects, **Vasishtha and Sainika.** "Vasishtha" is a Sanskrit name which means "avoid going near." How did he get such a name? He was a shepherd boy. One day the Prince of Vaishali was outside playing. Happening upon the shepherd boy, the prince made him act as his bed and lay down and took a nap on top of the boy. This upset the shepherd boy, who went home and told his mother, "The Prince of Vaishali used me as a bed and took a nap on top of me." Knowing that the prince would one day become the king and have a lot of power, the mother instructed her son, "From now on, don't hang around him. Avoid going near him. Keep your distance." That's how he got the name "Avoid Going Near."

"Sainika" is also a Sanskrit name which means "endowed with an army." Judging from his name, he was probably someone who enjoyed serving in the military and had the air of a military man. These two people, **who maintained the idea of comprehensive awareness, will become his companions.** They believed they

knew everything, and now they become this cultivator's companions. **Confused about the Bodhi the Buddhas, he will lose his proper knowledge and understanding.**

K3 He gives it a name and warns us to be aware of it.

Sutra:

"This is the fourth state, in which he draws an erroneous conclusion based on the idea that there is a universal awareness. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds of a distorted view of awareness.

Commentary:

This is the fourth state, in which he draws an erroneous conclusion based on the idea that there is a universal awareness. In this fourth kind of attachment, he claims to know everything and thinks there's nothing he does not know. However, that's just his attachment. He really doesn't know anything at all. He realizes a false result. "Erroneous" means that there's no such thing. **He strays far from perfect penetration.** He is way off track, going against the Dharma-door of cultivating perfect penetration through the ear. **And** he **turns his back on the City of Nirvana,** on the principle of non-production and non-destruction. **Thus he is sowing the seeds of a distorted view of awareness,** an upside-down understanding. Take plants-nobody would regard them as sentient beings, yet he does just that. He says that people are just plants, and that plants can also become people.

Someone suggests, "But there are trees endowed with souls. Doesn't that mean they have awareness?"

No. In such cases, there is a spirit inhabiting the tree. It's not that the tree itself has awareness and is a sentient being.

J5 Attachment to birth that is not actually birth.
K1 When formations are gone, consciousness appears.

Sutra:

"Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Commentary:

Further, the good person who is cultivating samadhi has investigated to the point that he **has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of** the state of **ultimate serenity.** He still carries the tiny seeds of production and destruction within him.

K2 A wrong understanding leads to a mistake.

Sutra:

"If he has attained versatility in the perfect fusion and interchangeable functioning of the sense faculties, he may speculate that all things arise from these perfect transformations. He then seeks the light of fire, delights in the purity of water, loves the wind's circuitous flow, and contemplates the accomplishments of the earth. He reveres and serves them all. He takes these mundane elements to be a fundamental cause and considers them to be everlasting. He will then fall into the error of taking what is not production to be production. Kashyapa and the Brahmans who seek to transcend birth and death by diligently serving fire and worshipping water will become his companions. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

Commentary:

If he has attained versatility in the state of **perfect fusion and interchangeable functioning of the** six **sense faculties,** if he can

follow his inclinations and do as he wishes, **he may speculate that all things arise from these perfect transformations.** Becoming attached to the perfect transformations from which everything comes forth, **he then seeks the light of fire** and worships fire with extreme devotion. He also **delights in the purity of water,** sincerely revering the pure nature of water, and **loves the wind's circuitous flow,** being inspired by the nature of wind with its continuous movement.

And he **contemplates the accomplishments of the earth. He reveres and serves them all –** the various aspects of earth, water, fire and wind. He bows to fire, prostrates himself before water, worships the wind, and makes obeisance to the earth.

He says, "It is truly inconceivable. How is fire able to emit light? Water is so pure. I really ought to worship it."

From morning to night he bows to water, fire, wind, and earth, worshipping the four elements. He serves them by making offerings to them. Each spirit has spirits connected with it, and soon he is treating the earth spirits, water spirits, fire spirits, and wind spirits as his own ancestors. Mahakashyapa [the Buddha's disciple] was originally a member of the fire-worshipping religion, and he used to bow in homage to fire.

He takes these mundane elements – earth, water, fire and wind **– to be a fundamental cause** of himself, and he **considers them to be everlasting.** He says they abide forever. Well, it's true that earth, water, fire and wind are just the Treasury of the Tathagata. However, you should pay reverence to the Treasury of the Tathagata, and not to earth, water, fire, and wind. Otherwise you are putting a head on top of a head. Instead of working on the fundamentals of venerating the Treasury of the Tathagata and respecting the Buddha, he is busy worshipping the superficial aspect. **He will then fall into the error of taking what is not production to be production.** He wants to end birth and death, but being unable to do so, he forms such an attachment.

Kashyapa and the Brahmans who seek to transcend birth and death by diligently serving fire and worshipping water will become his companions. Kashyapa belongs to the "great turtle clan." The Brahmans are those who cultivate pure practices. They exert themselves physically and mentally by engaging in various unbeneficial ascetic practices. They make offerings to fire and bow to water, hoping that by serving the four elements they can end birth and death. The cultivator becomes the friend and comrade of such people. **Confused about the** true nature of **Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.** He loses his genuine wisdom.

K3 He gives it a name and warns us to be aware of it.

Sutra:

"This is the fifth state, in which he confusedly pursues the elements, setting up a false cause that leads to false aspirations based on speculations about his attachment to worship. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds of a distorted view of transformation.

Commentary:

This is the fifth state, in which he confusedly pursues the elements, setting up a false cause that leads to false aspirations based on speculations about his attachment to worship. This is the fifth upside-down theory. His speculations about his attachment lead him to worship and make offerings to the four elements. He becomes confused about his own everlasting true mind, the Treasury of the Tathagata, and goes running out after the material elements instead. He bases himself on fallacious knowledge and views in his quest to escape birth and death. This is the "false cause." With this wrong cause, he vainly hopes to transcend birth and death. **He strays far from** the Dharmadoor of **perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds of a distorted** and wrong **view of transformation.**

J6 Attachment to a refuge that is not actually a refuge.
K1 After formations are ended, consciousness manifests.

Sutra:

"Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Commentary:

Further, the good person, who is cultivating perfect penetration through the ear by directing the hearing inward to listen to the inherent nature, **has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty.** He has investigated the formations skandha, seen it as empty, and broken through it. **He has already ended** the path of **production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the bliss of the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.**

K2 A wrong understanding leads to a mistake.

Sutra:

"He may speculate that there is an emptiness within the perfect brightness, and based on that he denies the myriad transformations, taking their eternal cessation as his refuge. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of taking what is not a refuge to be a refuge. Those abiding in the shunyata of the Heaven of [Neither Thought nor] Non-Thought will become his companions. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

Commentary:

He may speculate that there is an emptiness within the perfect brightness, and based on that he denies the myriad transformations, taking their eternal cessation as his refuge. He speculates that there is an emptiness within the brightness, but that is not the case. Isn't that to deny the existence of all the myriad

things? Therefore, it is not a refuge of eternal cessation. However, he makes it his refuge.

If he interprets this as a supreme state, if he has such a crazy understanding, **he will fall into the error of taking what is not a refuge to be a refuge.** He wants to rely on a refuge, but there is no such refuge. It is not eternal production or eternal cessation, so it cannot be a refuge, which is what he takes it to be. There is no refuge.

Those abiding in the shunyata of the Heaven of [Neither Thought nor] Non-Thought become his companions. His attachment is not to the Heaven of Non-Thought among the heavens of the Fourth Dhyana, but rather the Heaven of Neither Thought nor Non-Thought. The spirits of emptiness (*shunyata*) there become his companions. **Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he loses his** proper **knowledge and understanding.**

K3 Giving its name and instructions to awaken.

Sutra:

"This is the sixth state, in which he realizes a state of voidness based on the idea of emptiness within the perfect brightness. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds of annihilationism.

Commentary:

This is the sixth state of crazy understanding, **in which he realizes a state of voidness based on the idea of emptiness within the perfect brightness.** The state he attains doesn't really exist. **He strays far from perfect penetration.** He goes against the practice of that Dharma-door. He **turns his back on the City of Nirvana.** what he does is contrary to the wonderful fruition of Nirvana, **and** he **sows the seeds of annihilationism.**

J7 Attachment to an unattainable craving.
K1 After formations are ended, consciousness manifests.

Sutra:

“Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Commentary:

Further, the good person who is cultivating samadhi **has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty.** For him, the formations skandha is already empty. **He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.** He has yet to perfect the wonderful bliss of Nirvana.

K2 A wrong understanding leads to a mistake.

Sutra:

“In the state of what seems to be perfect permanence, he may bolster his body, hoping to live for a long time in that subtle and perfect condition without dying. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of being greedy for something unattainable. Asita and those who seek long life will become his companions. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

Commentary:

In the state of what seems to be perfect permanence, he may bolster his body, hoping to live for a long time in that subtle and perfect condition without dying. He may try to make his body durable because he wishes to dwell in the world forever. He seeks immortality and a life of essential clarity and perfection. **If he interprets this as a supreme state,** if he has such a crazy understanding, **he Will fall into the error of being greedy for**

something unattainable. He craves immortality but cannot attain it.

Asita and those who seek long life will become his companions. "Asita" is a Sanskrit name that translates as "incomparable," meaning "no one can compare with him." He and his followers are an external sect; they dwell in the heavens and crave immortality. The cultivator joins ranks with them. **Confused about** the Dharma-door of **the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his** proper **knowledge and understanding.**

K3 Giving its name and instructions to awaken.

Sutra:

"This is the seventh state, in which he sets up the false cause of bolstering and aspires to permanent worldly existence, based on his attachment to the life-source. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds for false thoughts of lengthening life.

Commentary:

This is the seventh state, in which he sets up the false cause of bolstering and aspires to permanent worldly existence, based on his attachment to the life-source. He clings to the source of his own life and bolsters his body in the hope of attaining long life.

He strays far from perfect penetration. He goes against the Dharma-door of cultivating the perfect penetration of the ear by directing the hearing inward to listen to his own nature. **And** not only that, **he turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds for false thoughts of lengthening life.**

J8 Attachment to truth that is not actually truth.
K1 After formations are ended, consciousness manifests.

Sutra:

"Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and

destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Commentary:

Further, the good person who is cultivating samadhi **has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty;** he has broken through the formations skandha. **He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder** and wonderful bliss **of ultimate serenity.**

K2 A wrong understanding leads to a mistake.

Sutra:

"As he contemplates the interconnection of all lives, he wants to hang on to worldly enjoyments and is afraid they will come to an end. Caught up in this thought, he will, by the power of transformation, seat himself in a lotus flower palace, conjure up an abundance of the seven precious things, increase his retinue of beautiful women, and indulge his mind. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of taking what is not the truth to be the truth. Vignakara will become his companion. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

Commentary:

As he contemplates the interconnection of all lives, this person sees that his own life is interrelated with the lives of all beings, and **he wants to hang on to worldly enjoyments and is afraid they will come to an end.** He fears that his worldly existence will come to an end, and he doesn't want it to end.

Caught up in this thought, he will, by the power of transformation, seat himself in a lotus flower palace, conjure up an abundance of the seven precious things, increase his retinue of beautiful women, and indulge his mind. Within his lotus flower palace, he conjures up all kinds of gems and enlarges his following of concubines and beautiful women. Then he gives free rein to lust and greed.

If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of taking what is not the truth to be the truth. At this point, he again considers this to be supreme. He thinks he has attained what is true, but it is not true. It is merely what he maintains.

Vignakara will become his companion. "Vigna" is Sanskrit and translates as "to tie and to bind." This refers to tying and binding living beings with rope. "Kara" is also Sanskrit and translates as "my doing." This means, "The bondage of all living beings, that is, their lack of freedom, is all my doing. It is because of me that they are not free." That's how the members of this external sect think. This cultivator joins ranks with them. **Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his** proper **knowledge and understanding** and will only have wrong knowledge and understanding.

K3 Giving its name and instructions to awaken.

Sutra:

"This is the eighth state, in which he decides to indulge in worldly enjoyments, based on his wrong thinking. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds for becoming a demon of the heavens.

Commentary:

This is the eighth state, in which he decides to indulge in worldly enjoyments, based on his wrong thinking. Due to his wrong thoughts, he gets caught up in his burning passion for worldly things. **He strays far from perfect penetration.** He goes against the Dharma-door of cultivating perfect penetration through the ear. **And** he **turns his back on the City of Nirvana** and the principle it embodies, **thus sowing the seeds for becoming a demon of the heavens.** He will be reborn among the demons in the heavens.

J9 Fixed-nature hearers.

K1 After formations are ended, consciousness manifests.

Sutra:

"Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Commentary:

Further, the good person has investigated and **has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has already ended** the nature that is subject to **production and destruction, but he has not yet** fully **perfected the subtle** and **wonder** bliss **of ultimate serenity.**

K2 A wrong understanding leads to a mistake.

Sutra:

"In his understanding of life, he distinguishes the subtle and the coarse and determines the true and the false. But he only seeks a response in the mutual repayment of cause and effect, and he turns his back on the Way of Purity. In the practice of seeing suffering, eliminating accumulation, realizing cessation, and cultivating the Way, he dwells in cessation and stops there, making no further progress. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall and become a fixed-nature Hearer. Unlearned Sanghans and those of overweening pride will become his companions. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

Commentary:

In his illusory **understanding of life, he distinguishes the subtle and the coarse.** He differentiates between what is fine and what is coarse, **and determines the true and the false.** He judges what is true and what is false. **But he only seeks a response in the mutual repayment of cause and effect.** He seeks a response

through cause and effect. The response also comes from cause and effect. **And he turns his back on the Way of Purity.**

In the practice of seeing suffering, eliminating accumulation, realizing cessation, and cultivating the Way. To see suffering means to know suffering. The Truth of Suffering includes the Three Sufferings, the Eight Sufferings, and limitless sufferings. The Truth of Accumulation refers to all our afflictions. Cessation refers to cultivating the Way and realizing cessation, that is, attaining the wonderful bliss of Nirvana. The Way refers to the way of cultivation. That's what is meant by knowing suffering, eliminating accumulation, longing for cessation, and cultivating the Way. **He dwells in cessation and stops there, making no further progress.** When he reaches cessation, he stops advancing.

If he interprets this as a supreme state, if he comes up with a crazy rationalization which he considers superior, **he will fall and become a fixed-nature Hearer.** What is a fixed-nature Hearer (*shravaka*)? We've talked about this before. He is a person who refuses to turn from the small and go toward the great. He becomes satisfied prematurely and refuses to advance further. **Unlearned Sanghans and those of overweening pride will become his companions.** He is as ignorant as the Unlearned Bhikshu who thought the Fourth Dhyana was the fourth fruition of Arhatship. Such people become his companions. **Confused about the Buddha's** enlightened **Bodhi**-nature, **he will lose his** proper **knowledge and understanding.**

K3 Giving its name and instructions to awaken.

Sutra:

"This is the ninth state, in which he aspires toward the fruition of cessation, based on perfecting the mind that seeks responses. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds for becoming enmeshed in emptiness.

Commentary:

This is the ninth state, in which he aspires toward the fruition of cessation, based on perfecting the mind that seeks responses. He strays far from the Dharma-door of **perfect penetration** through the ear. **And** he **turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds for becoming enmeshed in emptiness.** He gets stuck in emptiness and stillness. He has no desire to progress and no wish to retreat. Emptiness becomes the most important thing in his life. He gets wrapped up in emptiness. Actually, emptiness means there is nothing at all, but he invents an emptiness within emptiness and becomes attached to it.

J10 Fixed-nature pratyekas.
K1 After formations are ended, consciousness manifests.

Sutra:

"Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Commentary:

Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations skandha as empty. He has thoroughly investigated the states of the formations skandha, and they are empty for him. **He has already ended** the states of **production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder** and bliss **of ultimate serenity.**

K2 A wrong understanding leads to a mistake.

Sutra:

"In that perfectly fused, pure, bright enlightenment, as he investigates the profound wonder, he may take it to be Nirvana and fail to make further progress. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall and become a fixed-nature Pratyeka. Those Enlightened by Conditions and Solitarily Enlightened

Ones who do not turn their minds to the Great Vehicle will become his companions. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

Commentary:

In that state of **perfectly fused, pure, bright enlightenment, as he investigates the** principle of **profound wonder, he may take it to be Nirvana and fail to make further progress** in his cultivation, even though he has not yet broken through the consciousness skandha. **If he interprets this** wild and false understanding **as a supreme state, he will fall and become a fixed-nature Pratyeka** who fails to turn from the small and go toward the great.

Those Enlightened by Conditions and Solitarily Enlightened Ones who do not turn their minds to the Great Vehicle, the fixed-nature Arhats, **will become his companions.** He will join ranks with them. **Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas,** the path to Enlightenment, **he will lose his** proper **knowledge and understanding.**

K3 Giving its name and instructions to awaken.

Sutra:

"This is the tenth state, in which he realizes a profound brightness based on fusing the mind with perfect enlightenment. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds for being unable to surpass his attachment to the brightness of perfect enlightenment.

Commentary:

This is the tenth state, the last of the gates of the consciousness skandha. If you can pass through this gate, then you won't have to worry anymore. There is no further danger. Unfortunately, this final step is not an easy one to take. At this point he's off by just a tiny bit. It is said, "If you are off by a hairsbreadth at the beginning, you will miss by a thousand miles at the end." If you're just a tiny bit off

at the start, you'll be way off at the stage of fruition. This state is one **in which he realizes a profound brightness based on fusing the mind with perfect enlightenment.** At this time, the doctrine of perfect enlightenment is about to merge with his permanent true mind, and he attains a purity and brightness.

He strays far from perfect penetration. Nevertheless, he has not meshed with the Dharma-door of perfect penetration of the ear, because he still has attachments. **And** he **turns his back on the City of Nirvana,** going against the wonderful fruition of Nirvana, **thus sowing the seeds for being unable to surpass his attachment to the brightness of perfect enlightenment.** He cannot get past his attachment to that state of perfection. There is still that tiny bit which he does not understand before he breaks through the consciousness skandha.

If at this point he can break through without succumbing to crazy interpretations, then he will have broken through all five skandhas. When the five skandhas have been broken through, he will attain the positions of the Ten Faiths, the Ten Dwellings, the Ten Practices, the Ten Transferences, and the Ten Grounds. Then he can rest assured that he will attain Buddhahood.

I3 Conclusion on the harm and command to offer protection.
J1 Show how this happens due to interaction.

Sutra:

"Ananda, these ten states of dhyana are due to crazy explanations on the path of cultivation. Relying on them, the cultivator becomes confused and claims to have attained complete realization before actually having done so. All these states are the result of interactions between the consciousness skandha and his mental efforts.

Commentary:

Ananda, you should pay special attention to this point and understand it well. You should recognize the demon states that appear in **these ten states of dhyana**-these ten Dharma-doors of

contemplation in stillness. These ten states which appear in the cultivation of dhyana **are due to crazy explanations on the path of cultivation.**

Relying on them, the cultivator becomes confused and claims to have attained complete realization before actually having done so. At this point, although he has not attained the Way and realized the fruition, he says, "I've realized the fruition." Not having realized the first fruition, he says he has. Not having attained the second, third, or fourth fruitions either, he claims he has. He has not become a Buddha, yet he claims he has. If you ask him how he became a Buddha, he doesn't know. A Buddha who doesn't know how he attained Buddhahood is certainly a muddled Buddha! But Buddhas all have perfect understanding, and there are no muddled Buddhas. If he's muddled, then he is just a ghost, goblin, demon, or weird creature who doesn't understand the truth.

All these states are the result of interactions between the consciousness skandha and his mental efforts. These are tricks of the consciousness skandha. When you work hard, the consciousness skandha battles against your skill. If you have the slightest bit of greed, lust or false thinking, you will enter a demonic state. If you become attached to this state, then you will be possessed by a demon.

You will come up with some crazy theory, and once you do, it will be very hard to smash through it. Even if others point out to the cultivator that he is incorrect, he won't believe them. He will think, "What do you know, anyway? I'm already a Buddha! What you're saying is not fight." Even if they tell him, he won't believe them. That is why such states occur.

[January 1983]

Just now, Guo Di said most of us have placed the state of breaking through the five skandhas too high, and he's absolutely right. The *Heart Sutra* says, "When Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara was practicing the profound Prajna Paramita, he illuminated the five skandhas and saw that they are all empty, and he crossed

beyond all suffering and difficulty." Avalokiteshvara (the One Who Contemplates at Ease) was sitting there meditating, advancing step by step in his cultivation of Dhyana, heading towards the stage of wisdom. He was able to understand that the five skandhas are empty. Once a person sees the skandhas of form, feeling, thinking, formations, and consciousness as empty, he will no longer be obstructed by them. Since they no longer cover him over, his wisdom comes forth.

At this point, he has not by any means realized any fruition or left the Triple Realm. He has some wisdom, which allows him to leave suffering and attain bliss. Yet he has not really left suffering and attained bliss; he still has a ways to go. He still has to "deeply enter the Sutra Treasury and have wisdom like the sea," and to not be turned by states. Right now, he is still being turned by the states of the five skandhas. Not only has he not realized the fourth fruition, he hasn't even reached the first fruition. An Arhat of the first fruition can walk without his feet having to touch the ground. His feet are about half a centimeter off the ground, so they never get muddy no matter where he goes. That's because he has eradicated the eighty-eight grades of delusion of views.

The delusion of views involves being confused by the state one is faced with and becoming attached to it. When one realizes the fruition, "The eyes see forms, but inside there is nothing. The ears hear sounds, but the mind doesn't know." One sees everything as empty and one has no attachments, so how could one "catch on fire and become possessed by a demon"? There are no demons to encounter and no fires to catch.

Being confused by principles and engaging in discrimination is called the delusion of thoughts. Sages of the second and third fruition must cut off the delusion of thoughts. If someone had already cut off the delusions of thought while cultivating in the realm of the five skandhas, would he be entertaining all kinds of wild thoughts and speculations? Would he make all kinds of discriminations as he investigates the principle? No way. He would

be able to decisively resolve any matter which comes up without having to discriminate and speculate about it. Those false thoughts all come from his consciousness. His consciousness is constantly discriminating the subtlest details. Not only has he not realized any fruition, he can't even ascend to the Heaven of Neither Thought nor Non-thought. Why not? Because he hasn't even seen through and put down his body! He's still going around in circles, expending effort on that stinking skinbag!

Do you think that someone who has broken through the five skandhas has realized some fruition? Breaking through the five skandhas is a path that has to be walked, and he is walking on that path. All of you should clearly recognize this state. Don't be like the Unlearned Bhikshu, who mistakenly thought that the Fourth Dhyana Heaven was the Fourth Fruition. A person who has broken through the five skandhas is only at the level of the First or Second Dhyana. He is still in the very early stages of cultivation. He has only just begun. You shouldn't mistake an elementary school student who has just begun his studies for a college graduate. Child prodigies who advance very quickly in their studies are not that common. In fact, they are extremely rare. You should be very clear about the Dharma. I didn't say this earlier, because I wanted to see how much wisdom you all had. If a person hasn't cut off the delusion of views and the delusion of thought, how can he have realized any fruition? It would be impossible.

[January 1983]

He hasn't realized any fruition yet. Those are all false states. Even if he has broken through form, feeling, thinking, formations, and consciousness, he still hasn't realized any fruition. He's just traveling on the path of cultivation, that's all. If he had realized any fruition, he would become irreversible; how could a demon possess him? Even a person who has realized the first fruition cannot be possessed by a demon.

[March 1983]

The *Heart Sutra* says, "He illuminated the five skandhas and saw that they are all empty, and he crossed beyond all suffering and difficulty." One who has broken through the five skandhas has merely understood the Principle of emptiness; he certainly hasn't ended birth and death or attained any fruition. He is still walking on the path (of cultivation) and has not reached his destination yet, so he can't be said to have ended birth and death. He has understood the principle of emptiness, which is a partial view, and at this point he feels that there isn't any suffering and there isn't any happiness. If he were to stop at this point, he would fall into an external path. If he continues to progress, then it will be possible for him to become enlightened and to realize the fruition-but he must be vigorous. Therefore, in cultivation, no matter what level you reach, if you become satisfied with what little you have attained and feel you've gone far enough, then you are simply limiting yourself and quitting when you're only halfway there. That will be as far as your understanding goes, and you will make no further progress.

J2 Confusion will bring harm.

Sutra:

"Dull and confused living beings do not evaluate themselves. Encountering such situations, their minds are confused by their individual likings and past habits, so they stop to rest in what they take to be the ultimate refuge. They claim to have perfected unsurpassed Bodhi, thus uttering a great lie. After their karmic retribution as externalists and deviant demons comes to an end, they will fall into the Relentless Hells. The Hearers and Those Enlightened by Conditions cannot make further progress.

Commentary:

Dull and confused living beings do not evaluate themselves. Living beings are obstinate and intractable in their delusion. They do not stop to consider just what they are. They haven't shed their dog hides and pig skins, yet they claim to be Buddhas. They really overestimate themselves.

Encountering such situations, their minds are confused by their individual likings and past habits. "Individual likings" refers to their personal desires and greedy attachments, which have confused and stupefied their minds in life after life. **So they stop to rest in what they take to be the ultimate refuge.** They figure they have reached a treasure trove. But in fact, they are abiding in a transformed city. That transformed city is not the treasure trove. These people were on a quest for treasures, but after going halfway, they grew weary and decided to give up. At that point, a person with spiritual powers conjured up a city and told them, "The treasure trove is just up ahead. We can go there and collect all the treasures. We can bring back all sorts of precious and rare jewels." The idea was that after they got there and took a rest, they could continue onwards. But all the people went to the transformed city, and thinking it was the treasure trove, they rested and did not go further. They say this is their final place of refuge, the place they want to go to.

They claim to have perfected unsurpassed Bodhi. They claim they have realized unsurpassed Bodhi and become Buddhas already, **thus uttering a great lie.** They haven't attained Buddhahood, but they say they have. Would any intelligent person say such a stupid thing? To say you've reached a position that you haven't reached is just being stupid. In a democratic country, we say everyone can become President. True, everyone has the potential to become President, but that doesn't mean everyone is the President. You have to be elected to office before you actually are the President. You can't just say that everyone is a President. Then who is the real President? Who is the Vice-President? It's the same principle here. If you've never gone to school or studied anything, and you don't even know how to sign your own name, could you really become the President? It's the same with becoming a Buddha. If you haven't cultivated, and you don't have what it takes to spend six years in the Himalayas or forty-nine days under the Bodhi Tree – if you haven't put in even one day of such

effort, how could you become a Buddha? That would be too easy. That's crazy.

After their karmic retribution as externalists and deviant demons comes to an end – after the demonic karma they incurred has come to an end, **they will fall into the Relentless Hells.** Their lives as demons will also come to an end at some point When that happens, they will fall into the Relentless Hells. **The Hearers and Those Enlightened by Conditions cannot make further progress.** If fixed-nature Hearers or fixed-nature PratyekaBuddhas utter a great lie, they will not fall into the hells. However, they won't be able to advance either. They cannot make further progress.

J3 Command to offer protection.

Sutra:

"All of you should cherish the resolve to sustain the Way of the Tathagata. After my Nirvana, transmit this Dharma-door to those in the Dharma-ending Age, universally causing living beings to awaken to its meaning. Do not let the demons of views cause them to create their own grave offenses and fall. Protect, comfort, and compassionately rescue them and dispel evil conditions. Enable them to enter the Buddhas' knowledge and understanding with body and mind so that from the beginning to the final accomplishment they never go astray.

Commentary:

All of you, Ananda, and all the great Bodhisattvas, great Arhats, great Bhikshus, great Elders, and others in this assembly, **should cherish the resolve to sustain the Way of the Tathagata.** You should honor the principles spoken by the Tathagata. **After my Nirvana, transmit this Dharmadoor** of the Shurangama Sutra, that of "directing the hearing inward to listen to the inherent nature, until the nature attains the unsurpassed Way." Transmit this Dharma-door of perfect penetration **to those in the Dharma-ending Age.** You should transmit this every day to those in the Dharma-ending Age, **universally causing living beings to awaken**

to its meaning. Let all living beings understand these principles clearly.

Do not let the demons of views cause them to create their own grave offenses and fall. There are demons of views and demons of views and love. When people see states, demons of views cause them to be moved by the states. Sometimes people see things, give rise to love, and get turned by those states. That's the demons of views and the demons of views and love. Don't let them cause people to create offenses and fall. **Protect, comfort and compassionately rescue them**-all living beings**-and dispel evil** and improper **conditions**. Subdue the crazy mind and wild nature. Put an end to wrong knowledge and views. **Enable them to enter the Buddhas' knowledge and understanding with body and mind so that from the beginning to the final accomplishment they never go astray.** Do not allow them to be sidetracked as they walk on the Proper Path.

CHAPTER 7

Concluding Instructions

G3 Concluding instructions.
H1 First instructs to transcend and certify.
I1 All Buddhas' former certification.

Sutra:

"It is by relying on this Dharma-door that the Tathagatas of the past, as many as fine motes of dust in eons as many as the Ganges' sands, have enlightened their minds and attained the Unsurpassed Way.

Commentary:

It is by relying on this Dharma-door of the *Shurangama Sutra* **that the Tathagatas of the past, as many as fine motes of dust in eons as many as the Ganges' sands, have enlightened their minds and attained the Unsurpassed Way.** By following this Dharma-door of the Great Shurangama Samadhi, their minds became enlightened and they realized the fruition of the Unsurpassed Way. This is the path they traveled. Now we also want to investigate this path. Only by cultivating this Way to perfection can we become Buddhas. It's not the case that we can reach Buddhahood without even taking the first step. Not to mention Buddhahood, even in the world, how many years of effort does it take to get a Bachelor's, a Master's, or a doctoral degree? How

much more must you work to attain a transcendental Buddhahood! if you were to claim to be a Buddha without even having taken the first step, that would be even more incredible than a dream! Even in a dream, you wouldn't say such an outrageous thing. Becoming a Buddha is not that simple.

I2 The end of consciousness is transcendence.

Sutra:

"When the consciousness skandha ends, your present sense faculties will function interchangeably. Within that interchangeable functioning, you will be able to enter the Bodhisattvas' Vajra Dry Wisdom. In your perfect, bright, pure mind, there will be a transformation.

Commentary:

When the consciousness skandha ends... When the formations skandha came to an end, you were in the consciousness skandha. If you had reached the position of the eighth consciousness, at that point you would be able to see the worlds of the ten directions as dearly as crystal. Nothing would obstruct your vision. However, before the consciousness skandha completely become the eighth consciousness, and the very subtle process of production and destruction is still going on in the seventh consciousness. Once those subtle movements of the seventh consciousness are gone and only the eighth consciousness remains, you will see everything in the universe as clearly as crystal. At that time, the eighth consciousness is transformed into the Buddhas' Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom. That state cannot be obtained, however, before you completely smash through the seventh consciousness. That is what it means to put an end to the consciousness skandha.

If the subtle movements of the seventh consciousness I are gone, **your present** six **sense faculties will function interchangeably.** The interchangeable functioning of the Six sense faculties was discussed above. Each faculty has the ~ functions of all six. For example, the eyes, which could only see things before, can now

hear, smell, taste, eat, touch, and think as well. One opens and unites the faculties so they can function interchangeably.

Within that interchangeable functioning, you will be able to enter the Bodhisattva's Vajra Dry Wisdom. "Vajra" means indestructible, which means non-retreating. You attain the three kinds of non-retreat: non-retreating position, non-retreating thought, and non-retreating practice "Dry Wisdom" refers to the Stage of Dry Wisdom. **In your perfect, bright, pure mind, there will be a transformation.**

Sutra:

"It will be like pure Vaidurya that contains a precious moon, and in that way you will transcend the Ten Faiths, the Ten Dwellings, the Ten Practices, the Ten Transferences, the Four Additional Practices, the Vajra-like Ten Grounds of a Bodhisattva's practice, and the perfect brightness of Equal Enlightenment.

Commentary:

What will the transformation be like? **It will be like** a **pure,** undefiled piece of **Vaidurya that contains a precious moon, and in that way you will transcend** the positions of **the Ten Faiths, the Ten Dwellings, the Ten Practices, the Ten Transferences,** and **the Four Additional Practices,** Which were discussed earlier. The Four Additional Practices are heat, summit, patience, and foremost in the world. You Will also transcend the states and levels of skill represented by **the Vajra-like Ten Grounds of a Bodhisattva's practice and the perfect brightness of Equal Enlightenment.**

I3 Perfect realization of the ultimate fruition.

Sutra:

"You will enter the Tathagata's sea of wondrous adornments, perfect the cultivation of Bodhi, and return to the state of non-attainment.

Commentary:

In this state, **you will enter the Tathagata's sea of wondrous adornments, perfect the cultivation of Bodhi, and return to the state of non-attainment.** Ultimately, there is nothing to be attained. Why? Because Bodhi is inherent in you and is not obtained from outside. The Treasury of the Tathagata is not something obtained externally. Rather, it is inherently yours. Thus, you "return to the state of non-attainment."

H2 He then instructs us to protect and uphold it.
I1 He first explains how it accords with the honored ones of the past.

Sutra:

"These are subtle demonic states that all Buddhas, World Honored Ones, of the past, discerned with their enlightened clarity while in the state of shamatha and vipashyana.

Commentary:

These ten states discussed above, which occur in the consciousness skandha, **are subtle demonic states that all Buddhas, World Honored Ones, of the past, discerned with their enlightened clarity while in the state of shamatha and vipashyana.** Shamatha is a kind of samadhi, in this case the wonderful Shurangama Samadhi.

Vipashyana refers to the skill of subtle and refined contemplation. Because of their enlightened understanding, they could discern those demonic states, which are extremely subtle and very difficult to detect.

[December 2, 1992]

Disciple: Here the Wonderful Shurangama Samadhi is explained as shamatha, but earlier shamatha referred to the Three Stoppings and Three Contemplations.

Venerable Master: The Three Stoppings and Three Contemplations are just an analogy. The principle is about the same.

Disciple: But it still isn't the Wonderful Shurangama Samadhi.

Venerable Master: He may realize and enter the Wonderful Shurangama Samadhi later on. This is explained differently in different places; it depends on the context. It's explained at a deeper level here. It is as when a child grows up, he does things differently, even though he has the same name and is the same person. There are changes, but it's pretty much the same thing. It's explained one way here, and another way there. If you insist on clinging to one way, then you don't understand.

Disciple: But only someone with the Venerable Master's wisdom can do this.

Venerable Master: For example, let me ask you about a quote from the Chan School, "With empty hands grasping a hoe, I walk and ride an ox. I walk across a bridge; the bridge flows, but not the water." What does this mean? Have you heard me say this before? There's nothing special about it! Of course your hands have to be empty to grasp a hoe. If your hands are holding something, how can they grasp the hoe? Most people ask, "How can empty hands grasp a hoe?" They don't understand, because they can't turn it around. That's how the Chan School is.

Disciple: Chan Masters usually talk in such a bizarre way, so even when they say something logical, people still can't figure out what they're saying.

Venerable Master: They were speaking to the conditions of the time, so if you talk about their words now, it's like trying to sketch something that changes over time – it will be off the mark. The Chan Masters deliberately spoke that way so you wouldn't understand and you wouldn't know what their real meaning was.

Disciple: Their words were aimed at a specific person or event, and not directed at other people…

Venerable Master: When those of later generations quote their words, they are simply "talking about food instead of eating it, and counting others' wealth instead of their own" – not getting any real benefit.

Disciple: For example, if a person is on the brink of enlightenment, then a Chan Master may hit him and cause him to be enlightened. Yet if those of later generations casually hit people, they won't get any results…

Venerable Master: As soon as you hit them, they get mad. When your cultivation has reached maturity, you can bump into something or touch something and get enlightened. When the time hasn't come, then even if you want to get enlightened, it won't happen. The more you want to, the less you'll be able to get enlightened, because your wishes are only false thoughts. You don't recognize your false thoughts, and so you follow along with your human mind, thinking, thinking, thinking… you can think to the end of the world and you still won't get anywhere.

I2 Orders him to recognize the demonic states, and to protect and uphold the samadhi.

Sutra:

"If you can recognize a demonic state when it appears and wash away the filth in your mind, you will not develop wrong views.

Commentary:

If you can recognize a demonic state when it appears before you and be able to tell whether it is a demon or a Buddha, **and** you can **wash away the filth in your mind, you will not develop wrong views.** Some states come from demons external to you and some come from your own mind. The external demons are easy to subdue. The internal demons of the mind are very difficult to subdue, because once you have wrong knowledge and views, it's very difficult to free yourself from them. After you have recognized the external demons, you have to cleanse away the filth of your own mind. what filth? The most important kind of filth in the mind is greed. We keep talking around it, and it always comes back to that. Greed, to be more specific, is lust If you don't have any thoughts of lust, you have washed away the filth of the mind, and you will not develop wrong views. If you do not cleanse the mind of lust, then a

lot of problems will come your way. All these problems arise because of greed. Ml kinds of trouble, afflictions, and ignorance then arise; and when they do, you get caught up in wrong views. If you can wash away these faults, you will also be rid of wrong views.

Sutra:

"The demons of the skandhas will melt away, and the demons from the heavens will be destroyed. The mighty ghosts and spirits will lose their wits and flee. And the li, mei, and wang liang will not dare to show themselves again.

Commentary:

The demons of the five **skandhas,** which have been discussed, **will melt away, and the demons from the heavens will be destroyed.** If you have genuine wisdom and don't get caught up in wrong views, the demons of the heavens will be obliterated. You will strike fear into their hearts. **The mighty ghosts and spirits will lose their wits and flee.** These beings are so strong that they can knock over Mount Sumeru single-handedly. But if you have proper knowledge and views and you have the Great Shurangama Samadhi, these powerful ghosts and spirits will lose their wits and flee in terror when they see you. **And the li, mei, and wang liang will not dare to show themselves again.** *Li*, *mei*, and *wang liang* are types of ghosts that were discussed earlier. They will also be gone for good.

Sutra:

"You will directly arrive at Bodhi without the slightest weariness, progressing from lower positions to Great Nirvana without becoming confused or discouraged.

Commentary:

You will directly arrive at Bodhi, the state of the Buddha, **without the slightest weariness.** You won't have any difficulty or trouble **progressing from lower positions to Great Nirvana without becoming confused or discouraged.** Even those with

inferior roots will be able to progress. You will head straight for the wonderful fruition of Nirvana, and your mind will not experience those earlier kinds of confusion and ignorance.

Sutra:

"If there are beings in the Dharma-ending Age who delight in cultivating samadhi, but who are stupid and dull, who fail to recognize the importance of dhyana, or who have not heard the Dharma spoken, you should be concerned lest they get caught up in deviant ways. You should single-mindedly exhort them to uphold the Dharani Mantra of the Buddha's Summit. If they cannot recite it from memory, they should have it written out and place it in the meditation hall or wear it on their person. Then none of the demons will be able to disturb them.

Commentary:

If there are beings in the Dharma-ending Age who delight in cultivating samadhi, but who are stupid and dull… No matter how much you teach living beings about being good, they still insist on going down bad roads. You don't teach them how to be bad, but they go down bad roads all by themselves. Learning to be good is as difficult as ascending to the heavens. Learning to be bad is as easy as sliding downhill. Why? The habits of living beings are very strong, and they have too much greed and desire. Those old habits, old problems, old karmic hindrances, and debts from offenses created in past lives are so numerous that they drag one down when one wants to go up. Learning to be good is as hard as climbing to the heavens, but learning to be bad is as easy as going downhill. Why? Because living beings have no wisdom and are stupid and dull.

They are ones **who fail to recognize the importance of dhyana.** They do not realize the vital importance of cultivating the Way. They do not know how necessary the practice of still contemplation is. **Or** they are those **who have not heard the Dharma spoken.** They don't know about the Dharma. Although they have not heard Dharma lectures and they don't know how to meditate

and practice still contemplation, they nonetheless delight in cultivating samadhi. Those who wish to cultivate samadhi have to understand the Way and be clear about the Dharma. So **you should be concerned lest they get caught up in deviant ways.** If you fear that such people will come to have wrong knowledge and views, then you must warn them.

You should single-mindedly exhort them to uphold the Dharani Mantra of the Buddha's Summit. Urge them to recite the most supreme dharani, the Shurangama Mantra. **If they cannot recite it from memory, they should have it written out and place it in the meditation hall.** If they keep reciting the Mantra but cannot memorize it and have to look at the book, you can tell them to write it out and place it in the room where they sit in meditation. That's because, "Wherever the Sutra is kept the Buddha is present." How much the more is this the case for the Mantra. Wherever this Mantra is found, there will be Vajra Treasury Bodhisattvas and their retinues, and all the Dharma-protecting good spirits. **Or** you can tell these cultivators to **wear it on their person. Then none of the demons will be able to disturb them.** If you wear the Mantra on your body, the demons cannot get to you.

[January 1983]

If a person who has been possessed by a demon recites the Shurangama Mantra, will the demon leave? If you recite the Shurangama Mantra, whatever demon you have will leave, provided you recite with single-minded concentration. If you recite with a concentrated mind, without any extraneous false thoughts or any greed, then the demon will go far away. It's only to be feared that you'll recite the mantra on the one hand, but entertain false thoughts on the other, and that you won't be able to get rid of thoughts of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicants. If that's the case, then no mantra that you recite will be efficacious.

I3 Advises him to revere this teaching as an example from the past.

Sutra:

"You should revere this final paradigm of ultimate cultivation and progress of the Tathagatas of the ten directions."

Commentary:

With utmost sincerity and concern, Shakyamuni Buddha makes a final entreaty. He says to Ananda, **"You should revere this final paradigm of ultimate cultivation and progress of the Tathagatas of the ten directions."** You should respect and honor the Wonderful Shurangama Samadhi, the Dharma-door of the "perfect penetration of the ear through directing the hearing inward to listen to the inherent nature," and also the Dharma-door of the Spiritual Shurangama Mantra – the Supreme Honored Dharani Mantra of the Buddha's Summit which unites all dharmas and holds limitless meanings. This is the mind and nature of all the Tathagatas of the ten directions. It is the mother of all Tathagatas. It is the most ultimate, most thorough, and most subtly wonderful Dharma-door of cultivation and progress. It is the final paradigm of all the Tathagatas of the ten directions. It is the most important Dharma-door, which has been explained at the very end. It is the most important paradigm, method, and instruction concerning the road you should take to attain the Buddhas' knowledge and understanding.

CHAPTER 8

The Arising and Cessation of the Five Skandhas

E2 Request for further explanation of the arising and cessation of the five skandhas.
F1 Ananda repeats the former teaching and makes a request.

Sutra:

Ananda then arose from his seat. Having heard the Buddha's instruction, he bowed and respectfully upheld it, remembering every word and forgetting none. Then once more in the great assembly he spoke to the Buddha, "The Buddha has told us that in the manifestation of the five skandhas, there are five kinds of falseness that come from our own thinking minds. We have never before been blessed with such subtle and wonderful instructions as the Tathagata has now given.

Commentary:

Ananda then arose from his seat. Having heard the Buddha's instruction, he bowed and respectfully upheld it, remembering every word and forgetting none. Hearing Shakyamuni Buddha's teaching, Ananda bows to the Buddha, but this time he does not cry. He cried so many times in the past, but now he does not cry, because he has eaten his fill. He's been like a child drinking milk. Now that he's full, he doesn't cry anymore. Or

again, he's like a child that wants candy; once he gets his fill of sweets, he stops crying. Ananda has also obtained some candy to eat, so he does not cry anymore. He prostrated himself and upheld the Dharma-door of the Great Shurangama Samadhi with extreme reverence. He had memorized the Spiritual Shurangama Mantra without getting a single syllable wrong or leaving any out and every word and phrase was very clear. As he recited the mantra with his mouth, he contemplated it in his mind and did not create any evil karma with his body. Thus the three karmas of body, mouth, and mind were all pure as he recited the Spiritual Shurangama Mantra.

Then once more in the great assembly he spoke to the Buddha. People should not get the wrong idea here. When Ananda speaks out again in the assembly, it's certainly not the case that he is showing off. It's not that he wants every-one to notice him. What is he doing, then? He is seeking the Dharma on behalf of living beings. He is doing it not for his own sake, but for you and me-his fellow cultivators in the present time. He thinks, "Oh, in the future there will be a Dharma Assembly in America. Someone will lecture on the *Shurangama Sutra* there, and those people may not have totally understood it to this point, so I will ask for some more Dharma on their behalf." We should really be grateful to Ananda.

He said, **"The Buddha has told us that in the manifestation of the five skandhas** of form, feeling, thinking, formations, and consciousness, **there are five kinds of falseness that come from our own thinking minds."** Each of these five kinds of falseness further divides into ten kinds of demonic states. "**We have never before been blessed with such subtle and wonderful instructions as the Tathagata has now given.** Those of us in this great assembly have never before, in our ordinary, daily lives, heard the Buddha speak such wonderful doctrines. We have truly gained what we never had before, and we are peaceful and content in body and mind."

Sutra:

"Further, are these five skandhas destroyed all at the same time, or are they extinguished in sequence? What are the boundaries of these five layers?

Commentary:

Further, are these five skandhas of form, feeling, thinking, formations and consciousness **destroyed all at** the same time – an we get rid of them all at once – or are they extinguished in sequence? Do they go away little by little, in a certain order, one layer after another? What are the boundaries of these five layers? What are their limits?

Sutra:

"We only hope the Tathagata, out of great compassion, will explain this in order to purify the eyes and illuminate the minds of those in the great assembly, and in order to serve as eyes for living beings of the future."

Commentary:

We only hope the Tathagata, out of great compassion, will explain this. Our only wish is that the Tathagata will let the great compassion issue forth from his heart and explain this for us, **in order to purify the eyes and illuminate the minds of those in the great assembly.** Clear up our eyes and minds." if your mind does not understand, you will not cultivate. If your eyes are clouded by defilements, they will not be able to see dearly. So Ananda asks that the eyes and minds of those in the great assembly be purified. Not only does he want their eyes and minds to be purified, he also requests that the Buddha **serve as eyes for living beings of the future –** that is, for you, me, and all other living beings of the present. We are all included in the definition of living beings. You cannot exclude yourself even if you want to.

If you say, "I don't count. I am not part of the definition of living beings," then let me ask you, what are you? Speak up. Even if you wanted to, you can't run away. Even if you put on wings, you

can't fly off. Even if you went to the moon, you would still be a living being. You can't be anything else. So be good and admit that you're part of our group. Don't run away. Being good means you shouldn't lose your temper or act up. Your mind shouldn't feel like a pancake that sizzles and sticks to the pan. That's very hard to bear.

Ananda says, "Be eyes for us and for those of the future." The mission does not end here. "Eyes for the future" continues on into the future, and by definition that is a time that hasn't arrived yet.

When you hear this, don't you think it's wonderful? Does it make sense? When you laugh, all the people who don't understand Chinese are confused and want to know what you're laughing about, so let's translate this quickly!

F2 The Buddha answers three questions.
G1 He first answers that they arise from falseness.
H1 He shows the reasons for false thinking.
I1 Pursuing the source and finding it empty.

Sutra:

The Buddha told Ananda, "The essential, true, wonderful brightness and perfect purity of basic enlightenment does not admit birth and death, nor any mundane defilements, nor even empty space itself. All these are brought forth because of false thinking.

Commentary:

The Buddha told Ananda, "The essential, true, wonderful brightness and perfect purity of basic enlightenment does not admit birth and death. What is this state like? It is just the essential true, wonderfully bright and perfectly pure state of basic enlightenment. Birth and death cannot exist in that state, **nor any mundane defilements, nor even empty space itself."** What is being described is the Treasury of the Tathagata. It is the basic substance of True Suchness, the Buddha-nature inherent in us all. It's not that you have it and I don't or that I have it and you don't. We are all endowed with the essential, true, wonderful brightness and perfect purity of basic enlightenment. Within it there is not a

single defilement. Within it there is not a single dharma established. There isn't anything at all. If you can return to the origin, then you will be free of ignorance, lust greed, stupidity and false thinking-you will have none of them. It is an absolute and total purity. That is the aim of our cultivation: to return to that place inherent in us all. If this place did not exist there would be no reason for anyone to cultivate.

We can all see empty space, but do you know where it Comes from? **All these are brought forth because of false thinking.** Empty space comes from our false thoughts. False thinking brings into being the five skandhas, the five turbidities, and the six knots. It creates all kinds of troublesome things. This is just a case of looking for some-thing to do when there isn't anything to do. Why do you do it? Because you have no work to do, and you want to look for some. That's okay if you can reap a reward. Unfortunately, though, the more you work, the more you lose. If you work for others, the more work you do, the more money you lose. It's also like running a business-the longer you run it, the more money you lose. You keep taking losses until eventually the Treasury of the Tathagata is pressed flat beneath the mountain of the five skandhas. Once that happens, the bandits of the six sense faculties and the six sense objects occupy the mountain of the five skandhas as their hideout. They go all over it robbing and plundering. See how all the time until today you have been attracting thieves and sheltering bandits. At the beginning you were doing business, but then you began to lose capital, and now it's cost you your life. The thieves go about looting and stealing, and they go right ahead and kill people as well. Therefore, your inherent nature is squashed underneath the mountain of the five skandhas, and the six sense faculties and six sense objects are bandits that go around looting everywhere. Do you understand now? If you understand this principle, then I have not lectured on the Sutra in vain. If you don't understand, then you will have to study it gradually.

Sutra:

"The source of basic enlightenment, which is wonderfully bright, true, and pure, falsely gives rise to the material world, just as Yajnadatta became confused about his head when he saw his own reflection.

Commentary:

The source of basic enlightenment, in which not a single dharma abides – his essential, true, wonderful brightness and perfect purity of basic enlightenment – **which is wonderfully bright, true, and pure, falsely gives rise to the material world.** When that happens, falseness arises based on truth. In the Treasury of the Tathagata, falseness arises. The "sentient world" refers to all living beings while the "material world" refers to the mountains, rivers, buildings, and the earth itself.

It is **just as Yajnadatta became confused about his head when he saw his own reflection.** One morning he got up, looked in the mirror, and saw that the person in the mirror had eyes, ears, lips, and a nose, and he exclaimed, "Why don't I have a head like that? That person in the mirror has one, why don't I?" He went running all over the place trying to find his head. Do you think his head was actually lost though? Do you remember that I mentioned Yajnadatta earlier? If not, try to think back. What kind of person was Yajnadatta? Was he an intelligent person or a foolish one? Did he have a head, or was he headless? If you reply that he had no head, would you think he was a freak if you saw him? Think about it.

Today is the beginning of a new life for all of us here, so we must wash our bodies and minds clean. Put aside all the unclean things you were involved with in the past, and be sure that from now on the things you pick up are clean. By "clean" we mean being free of the Five Dull Servants: greed, hatred, stupidity, pride, and doubt. Today's precept transmission was the first of its kind in America, and so you are the first initiates into Buddhism in this country. But you should know that there aren't any advantages for the people

who come first. You will have to endure bitterness. Why is that? Because there is no model to follow. There are no precedents, and so you don't know how to go about what you have to do. Sometimes you'll get disoriented. You'll make mistakes without even realizing they are mistakes. Why? Because you basically don't understand what you're going about doing, and there is nowhere you can go to learn.

Although Japanese Buddhism has been in America for a long time, it is a very synthetic Buddhadharma. By that I mean it tends to be abstract and lacking in substance. You may call what they practice the Buddhadharma, but it really isn't like the Buddhadharma. But if you say it's worldly dharma, they will tell you it's the Buddhadharma. It's impossible to tell what it really is. It doesn't fit the mold. Why not? Because it doesn't have a genuine foundation. For instance, there's a Korean monk now who claims to be of the Cao Creek Sect. It's hard to figure out how Cao Creek got to Korea. It is a case of "Hanging out a sheep's head, but selling dog's meat" (false advertising). He hangs out a sign that says "the waters of Cao Creek," but what he sells is the mud and silt of Korea. There's no water in it, so how can it be Cao Creek? I really don't like to talk this way, but I see that these kinds of people are simply too pitiful. It's a case of the blind leading the blind. He claims to be of the Cao Creek Sect, and a lot of intelligent Americans follow him and become part of the Cao Creek Sect, too, but just exactly what is the origin of Cao Creek? They don't know. Where is Cao Creek located? What does that place look like? They don't know. This is truly a ridiculous sham.

Now you have received the precepts of orthodox Buddhism. This is the proper Buddhadharma, and it's different from those heretical sects that cheat people of their money in the name of the Way. For example, they say, "Give me sixty-five dollars, and I will transmit the Dharma to you." This isn't that. Now you have been given a precept sash. The money you paid does not come to me. It is used to purchase your sash. Whenever you attend a Dharma Assembly, you should wear the sash. It shows reverence for the

Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. This Dharma Assembly will conclude tomorrow. From now on, when-ever there is a Dharma Assembly, the people wearing sashes should stand in the front and those wearing only the robe, but not the sash, should stand in the back. Also, those who have held the precepts for a longer time should stand in front, and those who have newly received the precepts should stand in the back. This is the order we follow in Buddhism,

Today I congratulate you all for completing your three-month course of study. Although your study has concluded, your work is just starting. What is your work? You must help all human beings in the world to end their suffering. Their suffering can be ended only if someone lends a helping hand. The suffering of humanity is not limited to a single country. Throughout the whole world, humanity is suffering. Therefore, people of great wisdom are needed to remind humanity of its suffering. Only then will human beings know to seek for true happiness. What is the greatest Suffering? The greatest source of suffering is our greed. Greed is one of the greatest afflictions. Anger is also one of the biggest afflictions. And stupidity is also one of the greatest afflictions. Greed, anger, and stupidity are the three poison. Yet people feel that these three are their best friends, and so they are reluctant to part with them. Due to their lack of understanding, people don't renounce these poisons. If they understood, the suffering of humanity would come to an end.

In this Shurangama Dharma Assembly, which began on July 16, we cultivated and studied non-stop from six o'clock in the morning until nine o'clock in the evening every day. This period of a little over three months has been tremendously valuable. Now, this valuable time has already passed, and you have learned this precious knowledge and made it a part of yourselves. You must tell the whole world about the Buddhadharma that you have learned, so the whole world will know how to leave suffering, attain bliss, and realize great wisdom. Don't do any more foolish things or things that don't benefit people.

This Dharma Assembly could be considered the first of its kind in Buddhism throughout the entire world. It's absolutely unprecedented. Although there are many Sutra lectures in other places, they don't study from morning till night without rest like we've done. Now you should take the principles of Buddhism you've learned and use them to help all the world's people who are adrift in the sea of suffering. Help them to depart from suffering, find happiness, and quickly attain the Buddha Way. This is my hope.

I2 Judges the upside-down speculations to be wrong.

Sutra:

"The falseness basically has no cause, but in your false thinking, you set up causes and conditions. But those who are confused about the principle of causes and conditions call it spontaneity. Even empty space is an illusory creation; how much the more so are causes and conditions and spontaneity, which are mere speculations made by the false minds of living beings.

Commentary:

This passage discusses the causes and conditions of our false thoughts. What is meant by "causes and conditions"? When a person does not understand the principle of causes and conditions, in his confusion he will regard it as spontaneity and thus fall among the externalists. Therefore the text says: **The falseness basically has no cause.** There is no basis for a source of false thinking. Without any basis, there is no substance to it.

Someone asked me, "What is false thinking?"

My reply was, "What you're asking right now about false thinking is just false thinking. Your question itself is false thinking." Where do you go to find false thoughts? They don't have any root. Once they pass, they are gone. Being false, they are without substance. To speak of false thinking as a "thing" is already inappropriate, because fundamentally, there isn't any "thing." **But in your false thinking, you set up causes and conditions.** In your

false thinking, without any basis, you say that there are causes and conditions.

But those who are confused about the principle of causes and conditions call it spontaneity. If you understand causes and conditions, there's no problem. But those who are confused about the principle of causes and conditions do not have any understanding of it.

"Dharma Master, ultimately, what are these causes and conditions you've been talking about?" you may ask.

Causes and conditions were discussed at length earlier in the Sutra. It is a dharma used for refuting the dharmas of external teachings. It is a dharma of the Small Vehicle, and thus is basically not a particularly deep doctrine. It basically says that whatever the cause, so will be the conditions. People who do not understand the doctrine of causes and conditions will call it spontaneity instead. That's a case of "swallowing the date whole" [jumping to conclusions]. What is meant by swallowing the date whole? Maybe you aren't familiar with dates. You could say it's "swallowing an apple whole," without biting or chewing it first. What does it taste like? You don't know. Those who are confused about the principle of causes and conditions, those who misunderstand it, call it spontaneity, which is a doctrine of external sects.

Even empty space is an illusory creation. Now this does not refer to causes and conditions or spontaneity. This refers to empty space. What is empty space? It comes from your false thinking. As the verse spoken earlier by Manjushri Bodhisattva says: "The space created within great enlightenment / Is like a single bubble in all the sea." The empty space in the nature of great enlightenment is just like a bubble in the ocean; it comes from false thinking.

How much the more so are causes and conditions and spontaneity, which are mere speculations made by the false minds of living beings. What are causes and conditions? What is spontaneity? Causes and conditions and spontaneity-these two theories-are just speculations dreamed up by the false-thinking minds of

living beings. I don't know if my explanation is correct, but you can all think about it.

Sutra:

"Ananda, if you perceive the arising of falseness, you can speak of the causes and conditions of that falseness. But if the falseness has no source, you will have to say that the causes and conditions of that falseness basically have no source. How much the more is this the case for those who fail to understand this and advocate spontaneity.

Commentary:

Ananda, if you perceive the arising of falseness, you can speak of the causes and conditions of that falseness. Do you know how false thinking comes into being? If you know where false thinking comes from, then you can talk about its causes and conditions. **But if the falseness has no 'Source, you will have to say that the causes and conditions of that falseness basically have no source.** Since there is no falseness to begin with, what basis do you have for a discussion of the causes and conditions of false thinking? Since the falseness has no substance, it has no source. There is nothing at all. All dharmas are empty of characteristics. There is no source or foundation for the falseness. **How much the more is this the case for those who fail to Understand this and advocate spontaneity. I**f you don't even understand causes and conditions and you further advocate the principle of spontaneity, you will fail among the externalists. That won't do at all.

I3 Concluding with reiteration that the cause is false thinking.

Sutra:

"Therefore, the Tathagata has explained to you that the fundamental cause of all five skandhas is false thinking.

Commentary:

Therefore, because of the principles explained above, **the Tathagata has explained to you** very clearly **that the fundamental cause of all five skandhas –** form, feeling, thinking, formations, and consciousness **– is false thinking.** what is the basic cause of the five skandhas? False thinking. If you investigate false thinking, you will find that it has no substance of its own. In fact its mother is the five skandhas, and that is where it comes from. The five skandhas come from false thinking, and false thinking comes from the five skandhas. Based on the truth, falseness arises. Didn't I tell you this earlier? The mountain of the five skandhas is squashing you. And there are also six thieves on the mountain gathering their troops, horses, and supplies and going on looting raids. They will stop at nothing. The mountain of the five skandhas covers over the Treasury of the Tathagata, so that it cannot reveal itself. If there were only the mountain of the five skandhas, that wouldn't be so bad, but then six thieves come along and indulge in wanton robbery and theft. Buried under it all is the Treasury of the Tathagata. If you can subdue the six thieves and the five skandhas, then your Treasury of the Tathagata will reveal itself.

[January 1983]

We are now here investigating the Buddhadharma every day, and we should apply ourselves to it in the morning and in the evening; that's how it should be, day after day. If we fail to do this one day, then we'll have missed an opportunity. In the very second that you think of not continuing to do this, you lose the benefit you have gained. It's like a cat waiting to catch a mouse. It stays there waiting for a few days, and then goes off, because it's not patient enough. As soon as it leaves, the mouse comes out and doesn't get caught. That's how strange it is. It is also like when someone has been fishing for a few days, but no fish have snapped the bait because all the small fish have been devoured by a big fish. The big fish, having eaten its fill of little fish, doesn't want to eat anything else, so it's just there sleeping. It doesn't eat for several days, but

when it finally starts getting hungry, the fisherman runs out of patience and leaves, without having caught a single fish.

Basically, fishing and catching mice are both acts of killing. We cultivators are also engaged in killing Our targets are the six thieves-our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. We've been keeping watch over these six thieves for a few days, and so they haven't been able to have their way. But as soon as we become lax, the six thieves act up and rebel. That's how fierce they are. That's why we must be devoted in thought after thought. We must not slack off for even one second, or else the demons come. The demons bothered cultivators even when the Buddha was in the world, so they also had to be very cautious and to constantly work hard at cultivation.

What proof is there that demons were around when the Buddha was in the world? When the Sutras were being compiled after the Buddha had entered Nirvana, Ananda took the seat of the Dharma host in the Dharma assembly. At that time, his appearance became inconceivably adorned and perfect. The Arhats in the assembly wondered what was going on:

"What? Has Ananda become a Buddha?"

"Has a Buddha come from another world?"

"Is this a demon?"

Now, if there were no demons during the Buddha's time, why did those great Arhats entertain such doubts right after the Buddha had entered Nirvana? Demons must have frequently showed themselves even in the Buddha's day. All of you should reflect on this. When we apply ourselves to cultivation, we must not be careless even for an instant. At all times, we must plant our feet on solid ground and seriously cultivate. We are pursuing the truth, and if we slack off even the slightest bit our karmic obstacles will appear.

H2 Detailed examination of the fivefold false thinking.
I1 The false thinking of the form skandha.
J1 Explains that one's body is because of thinking.

Sutra:

"Your body's initial cause was a thought on the part of your parents. But if you had not entertained any thought in your own mind, you would not have been born. Life is perpetuated by means of thought.

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha says, "Ananda, **your body's initial cause was a thought on the part of your parents.**" How did you get your present body? Where did it come from? It was due to this kind of thought on the part of your parents. Although the text says "thought" here, it is actually an emotion. To put it more clearly, the "thought" is a kind of emotion. why is it said to be an emotion? Because egg-born beings come from thought, and womb-born beings come from emotion. Ananda is womb-born, not egg-born, so in his case the "thought" that caused his birth was emotion. Generally speaking, it's false thinking. At a deeper level, it's thought. And to go even deeper, it's emotion. The initial cause is the emotion of the parents. Because parents have the thought of emotional desire, they engage in sexual activity. As a result, a child is born. So isn't the child born from emotion?

But if you had not entertained any thought in your own mind, you would not have been born. Because your parents had emotional thoughts, sexual activity took place. However, when you were in the "body while in between skandhas," if you didn't have the emotion of either loving your father and hating your mother, or loving your mother and hating your father then your body would not have come into existence. You, too, in that period between skandhas, had thoughts of emotion. Because of that thought of emotion, your "body while in between skandhas" entered the womb. If you hadn't had that emotional thought, you wouldn't have entered the womb and you wouldn't have this body. That is a

definite fact. There's no way you can disagree with it. The text very decisively states that if you didn't have that thought of emotion, your body would absolutely not have come into being. How did it come into being?

Life is perpetuated by means of thought. The thought of emotion transmitted your life to you. The reason you have life is because of your emotional involvement with others. "Life is perpetuated by means of thought" means that your thoughts cause your lives to continue. If you didn't have any thought, your births and deaths would be ended. When the thinking skandha comes to an end, you leave distorted dream-thinking far behind. All dream-thinking will be gone. If your false thoughts are gone, your births and deaths will come to an end. Why do you undergo births and deaths? Simply because you have too many false thoughts. When one thought ceases, the next one arises. when that thought ceases, another one arises. Like waves on water, thoughts arise in endless succession and cause life to continue.

J2 Provides an analogy to explain in detail.

Sutra:

"As I have said before, when you call to mind the taste of vinegar, your mouth waters. When you think of walking along a precipice, the soles of your feet tingle. Since the precipice doesn't exist and there isn't any vinegar, how could your mouth water at the mere mention of vinegar, if it were not the case that your body originated from falseness?

Commentary:

The philosophical doctrines discussed in the Shurangama Sutra are ultimate. This is the summit of philosophy, the ultimate truth. But of course, the ultimate truth is also just the ultimate false thought. The Sutra is "true" in that it describes real situations. But where do these situations originate? In false thinking. The principle is ultimate, but its source is in false thinking. If false thoughts arise,

the principle comes into existence. Without false thinking, the principle doesn't exist, either.

Ananda, **as I have said before…** Do you remember what I told you before, about what happens **when you call to mind the taste of vinegar?** You think, "Ooh, that vinegar is really sour. Ugh! Those sour plums are really tart. One bite makes my teeth go weak." As soon as you think about this, **your mouth waters.** Your mouth secretes saliva, not because you're hungry, but because you're thinking of something sour. In Chinese, the expression "drinking vinegar" is used to describe jealousy. Don't be jealous of others; jealousy leaves a sour taste in your mouth. **When you think of walking along a precipice, the soles of your feet tingle** and become weak. You might lose your footing and plummet over the edge into the gorge thousands of feet below. Pretty dangerous, huh?

Since the precipice doesn't exist and there isn't any vinegar, how could your mouth water at the mere mention of vinegar? The precipice isn't really there; you are just thinking about it. But at the mere thought, your feet tingle-literally "go sour," in Chinese. Above, your mouth goes sour at the thought of sour plums or vinegar, and here, your legs and feet "go sour" at the thought of a precipice. How can your feet "go sour"? You tell me.

Someone says, "Dharma Master, you don't have to explain it. I already understand. I'm already enlightened, in fact. What did I enlighten to? Well, you were explaining earlier how each of the six sense faculties has the functions of all six. It must be that the feet go sour because they can eat."

Is that really how it is? I don't believe in your enlightenment. How come I haven't been enlightened to this yet, and you have already done so? There is no such principle. I cannot accept such a principle, because it is nothing but false thinking. The feet cannot eat, hear, or see things. The six faculties that function interchangeably are the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The feet are not included. That's why I absolutely refuse to acknowledge your so-called enlightenment.

There really isn't any precipice and there isn't any vinegar. Your false thoughts are all it takes to make your mouth water and your feet tingle and go weak. **If it were not the case that your body originate from falseness,** if your body did not come from illusory false thought, if it did not befriend false thinking, if it did not join false thinking, then why would your mouth water at the mention of vinegar? If your body did not come about because of false thought-emotional thought, why would saliva form in your mouth when I talk about vinegar? The vinegar is only being talked about; it is not really there. Since it is hypothetical, why is there a sour taste in your mouth? Can you still argue that the sourness in your mouth and the tingling in your feet do not come from false thinking? No, because they do come from false thinking.

J3 Concludes by naming it false thinking.

Sutra:

"Therefore, you should know that your present physical body is brought about by the first kind of false thinking, which is characterized by solidity.

Commentary:

Therefore, because of the principles explained above, **you should know that your present physical body is brought about by the first kind of false thinking, which is characterized by solidity.** You call it "solid," but this is just a name. In fact, your body is created by the first kind of false thought, by the skandha of form.

I2 The false thinking of the feeling skandha.
J1 Thinking results in feeling.

Sutra:

"As described earlier, merely thinking about a high place can cause your body to tingle and ache.

Commentary:

Then, **as** was **described earlier** in the section above, **merely thinking about a high place can cause your body to tingle and ache.** Imagine yourself standing at the edge of a high precipice. Just talking and thinking about it makes your feet start to tingle and ache. You feel very uncomfortable, as if your legs won't support you and you are going to fall. If you actually do walk to the edge of a deep abyss and look down into that bottomless void, the soles of your feet will turn to jelly. Even though you are not in danger of falling, you feel as if you are about to fall. This feeling is brought about by your false thinking.

For example, you can walk for miles on level ground without your feet ever turning to jelly or tingling from false thinking. But if you have to walk across a single plank bridge above a gorge with a mighty river racing below, you start thinking things like, "Wow, if I fell from here, it'd be all over. I'd drown and lose my life for sure." Everything was fine until you had that false thought but now all of a sudden your feet turn to jelly and you cannot take another step. As a result you do fall. It all happened because you had such a thought. If you had not had that false thought but, say, had just walked with your eyes closed, without knowing when you were crossing a single plank bridge, nothing would have happened. So you decide you'll try to cross the bridge with your eyes closed next time. But then you'll fall just the same, because you cannot see where you are going. If you cross the bridge with your eyes open, you have false thoughts about the churning water below, and you get scared. If you cross the bridge with your eyes shut, you'll walk off the bridge and fall as well.

Therefore, don't have false thoughts with your eyes open, and don't close your eyes and try to kill off your false thoughts that way. It won't work. This is the crux of the dilemma: If you have false thinking, your feet will turn to jelly; if you close your eyes, you will also fall into the gorge. Closing your eyes will not solve the

problem. The greatest difficulty is right here. It would be best not to have any false thoughts; then nothing at all would happen.

J2 Discussing its extent and concluding with the name.

Sutra:

"Due to that cause, feelings arise and affect your body, so that at present you pursue pleasant feelings and are repelled by unpleasant feelings. These two kinds of feelings that compel you are brought about by the second kind of false thinking, which is characterized by illusory clarity.

Commentary:

Due to that cause, feelings arise and affect your body. When you were born, you received your physical body, which has shape and form, **so that at present you pursue pleasant feelings and are repelled by unpleasant feelings.** You like what is favorable and beneficial to you, but you dislike what is harmful to you. **These two kinds of feelings –** these two false thoughts **that compel you – are brought about by the second kind of false thinking, which is characterized by illusory clarity.** "Illusory" means unreal, so this clarity is not real. This is the second kind of false thinking that you have.

I3 The false thinking of the thinking skandha.
J1 Body and mind in mutual response.

Sutra:

"Once your thoughts arise, they can control your body. Since your body is not the same as your thoughts, why is it that your body follows your thoughts and engages in every sort of grasping at objects? A thought arises, and the body grasps at things in response to the thought.

Commentary:

Once your thoughts arise, they can control your body. These false thoughts that you have drive your body, but your body is not your thoughts. **Since your body is not the same as your thoughts,**

since the body and the mind are not the same sort of thing, why are they aware of each other? **Why is it that your body follows your thoughts and engages in every sort of grasping at objects?** Why is it that when you give rise to a thought, your body acts accordingly? **A thought arises, and the body grasps at things in response to the thought.** Why is your body controlled by your thoughts? As soon as you have a thought your body wants to grasp at the object you are thinking about. Why does your body function in unison with your thoughts? What is a thought? You can have one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten thoughts....But here the text refers to just one thought. The *Prajna Sutra of the Humane King Who Protects His Country* says that there are ninety *kshanas* in a single thought. A kshana is an extremely short period of time. And yet within one kshana there are nine hundred births and deaths, that is, nine hundred productions and destructions. Thus it is said,

> *When not a single thought arises,*
> *the entire substance manifests.*
> *When the six sense faculties suddenly move,*
> *one is covered by clouds.*

If you could keep from having a single thought, the entire substance would manifest. What entire substance? The great function of the entire substance, the Treasury of the Tathagata It is your inherent family treasure; it is the scenery of your homeland; it is your original face. Upon the slightest movement of the six sense faculties, you become obscured by a covering of clouds. If a cultivator reaches the point where he does not have a single thought then the ghosts and spirits have no way to get at him. If not a single thought arises, then not a single thought passes away. If you cannot prevent thoughts from arising, then you cannot prevent them from passing away. This is an important point. If you can understand it then when you do not have a single thought the entire substance will manifest. But if your six faculties move again, you will be obscured by the dark clouds.

J2 Discussing its extent and concluding with the name.

Sutra:

"When you are awake, your mind thinks. When you are asleep, you dream. Thus your thinking is stirred to perceive false situations. This is the third kind of false thinking, which is characterized by interconnectedness.

Commentary:

When you are awake, your mind thinks. A few days ago, I talked about Lord Zhuang who was born as his mother was waking up. Because of this, his mother resented him and favored her second son, Gong Shuduan. She wanted the second son to inherit his father's throne and become the king. Therefore, she repeatedly asked King Wu to pass the throne to his younger son rather than to his older son. But King Wu would not allow it and so Lord Zhuang still became the king. When Lord Zhuang became king, his mother told Gong Shuduan to instigate a rebellion. But that also failed. So that is the story of Lord Zhuang. When you are awake, the thinking skandha is in control.

When you are asleep, you dream. When you are asleep, you dream. Your thinking skandha produces dreams. Previously, we mentioned how the thinking skandha could make one perceive things incorrectly in one's sleep. For example, if you are asleep and people are beating on clothes or pounding rice nearby, you may hear it as bells and drums being played. **Thus your thinking is stirred to perceive false situations.** When you dream, your thinking skandha makes you perceive the false situation of bells and drums being played.

This is the third kind of false thinking, which is characterized by interconnectedness. "Interconnectedness" means working together. The thinking skandha functions whether you are awake or asleep, so we call this "inter-connection," which means mutual cooperation. This is the third kind of false thinking, and it is associated with the thinking skandha.

I4 The false thinking of the formations skandha.
J1 Lack of awareness of bodily changes.

Sutra:

"The metabolic processes never stop; they progress through subtle changes: your nails and hair grow, your energy wanes, and your skin becomes wrinkled. These processes continue day and night, and yet you never wake up to them.

Commentary:

The metabolic processes never stop; day and night they continue. This is the formations skandha, which flows on unceasingly like waves. As one thought ceases, the next one arises. As that thought passes by, the next one comes up. They arise and cease one after another. These metabolic and transformational processes never end. They just go on working, never stopping to rest. **They progress through subtle changes** which you cannot perceive because they are so minute. Without your realizing it, the house is moved out from under you, and everything looks different. What are these subtle changes?

Your nails and hair grow. If you don't cut your nails for two days, they grow a little bit. After three days, they are a bit longer. After four days, they are longer still. Each day, they are longer than the day before. But do you know how much they grow in each second and each minute? Do you know how they grow longer? If you don't trim your hair for a month, it may grow almost half an inch. But how much does it grow each day? You don't know. You say, "Well, I'll calculate it." Sure, but will it be accurate? You can try using a computer to calculate it and see if the computer knows.

Your energy wanes. Your energy decreases from day to day. People are full of energy and zest in their youth, and they also have a lot of vitality in their prime. However, as they get older they start losing their energy. Although it's not totally gone, it's on the decline. **And your skin becomes wrinkled.** Your skin gets lined like a chicken's skin, and your hair turns as white as crane feathers. Your features become terribly aged, and you can no longer pass

yourself off as a young person. No amount of makeup can transform your eighty-year-old face into that of a twenty-year-old.

These processes continue day and night. This work goes on day and night – your nails grow, your hair gets longer, your energy wanes, and your skin gets wrinkled. It's more reliable than a clock. If you don't wind up your clock, it will stop. But you don't have to wind up your metabolism; it does its work just the same, unless you die. When you're dead, it stops working. **And yet you never wake up to them.** They pursue you day and night-through your youth, your prime, and your old age, right up to your death. After you die, you get reborn, and then you have to die again. You undergo endless rounds of birth and death, without ever waking up. You go right on being confused through it all. You're muddled when you come and muddled when you go. That's what the false thing of the formations skandha is all about.

Sutra:

"If these things aren't part of you, Ananda, then why does your body keep changing? And if they are really part of you, then why aren't you aware of them?

Commentary:

If these things aren't part of you, Ananda, then why does your body keep changing? Your body goes through all these transformations-the nails and hair grow longer, the energy wanes, and the skin gets wrinkled. You say your fingernails aren't yours? Then why do they continually grow long? You say the hair isn't yours? Then why does it keep growing on your head? You say the energy isn't yours, but why do you sometimes feel weak when your energy is insufficient? If your face isn't yours, how is it possible for it to become wrinkled? If you say the wrinkles don't have anything to do with you, why does your face get wrinkled? Why do those changes occur to your own body? If this isn't you, then why does your body keep changing? From your youth, you are transported into middle age. From middle age you move on to old age. From old age you go

right on to death. You cannot say these things are not yours. If this isn't your body, then you are not real.

And if you insist that **they are really part of you, then why aren't you aware of them?** Why can't you sense them at all? Your nails and your hair are growing, but you do not perceive it happening. Your energy is waning, but you do not feel it. Your face is getting wrinkled, but you cannot detect it nor do you know when the change took place.

This is a double refutation: If you say they belong to you, that's incorrect; but if you say they do not belong to you, that's also incorrect. And so, what is it you ask? It's false thinking! That's their source. They are all creations of false thinking.

J2 Discusses its extent and concludes with the name.

Sutra:

"Your formations skandha continues in thought after thought without cease. It is the fourth kind of false thinking, which is subtle and hidden.

Commentary:

Your formations skandha functions continuously, but its subtle movements are not at all easy to perceive. They are secret and obscure, and you are not aware of them at all. This is the fourth kind of false thinking, which is associated with the formations skandha.

I5 The false thinking of the consciousness skandha.
J1 Directly destroying the duality of true and false.

Sutra:

"Finally, if your pure, bright, clear, and unmoving state is permanent, then there should be no seeing, hearing, awareness, or knowing in your body. If it is genuinely pure and true, it should not contain habits or falseness.

Commentary:

Finally, if your pure, bright, clear, and unmoving state is permanent, then there should be no seeing, hearing, awareness, or knowing in your body. At this point, when you experience a pure brilliance and your state is clear and imperturbable, if you say this is a permanent state, then the functions of seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing should not occur in your body. **If it is genuinely pure and true, it should not contain habits or falseness.** Habits and false thinking should not arise.

Sutra:

"How does it happen, then, that having seen some unusual thing in the past, you eventually forget it over time, until neither memory nor forgetfulness of it remain; but then later, upon suddenly seeing that unusual thing again, you remember it clearly from before without forgetting a single detail? How can you keep track of the permeation that goes on in thought after thought in this pure, clear, and unmoving consciousness?

Commentary:

How does it happen, then, that having seen some unusual thing in the past, you eventually forget it over time, until neither memory nor forgetfulness of it remain. What is the reason for this? You may have seen something very peculiar, but after many years, you have no memory of it and you have no forgetfulness of it either. If you're able to say that you've forgotten something, that means you still have some recollection of its occurrence. However, now there is neither memory nor forgetfulness of it.

But then later, upon suddenly seeing that unusual thing again, you remember it clearly from before without forgetting a single detail. If you suddenly see that strange thing again, you will recall how you remembered it how you encountered it in the past and how it appeared to you then. You will not forget a single detail.

How can you keep track of the permeation that goes on in thought after thought in this pure, clear, and unmoving consciousness? In that clear and unmoving state, a kind of permeation is going on in thought after thought. How does one keep track of this? How does one recollect it? How do you explain the situation of having put something completely out of mind, only to remember it again when you encounter it again? Before seeing it again, you cannot recall it. But once you encounter it, you automatically recall it. How can this be reckoned? Who could keep these books straight? Who keeps track of this? This proves that although you have temporarily forgotten about it, your eighth consciousness remembers. That's why when you see the thing, you remember. There isn't really anyone keeping track. It's naturally stored in the eighth consciousness.

J2 Uses an analogy to explain.

Sutra:

"Ananda, you should know that this state of clarity is not real. It is like rapidly flowing water that appears to be still on the surface. Due to its speed you cannot perceive the flow, but that does not mean it is not flowing. If this were not the source of thinking, then how could one be subject to false habits?

Commentary:

Ananda, you should know that this state of clarity is not real. That still and unmoving place described above is not really still after all. Why not? **It is like rapidly flowing water that appears to be still on the surface.** When you look at it, it seems to have no waves and no current. **Due to its speed you cannot perceive the flow, but that does not mean it is not flowing.** Since there are no waves, you cannot see that the water is flowing. But that doesn't mean that there's no flow. It's flowing, but you cannot see it because there are no waves. Earlier, we discussed the formations skandha; now we are discussing the consciousness skandha. **If this were not the source of thinking, then how could one be subject to false habits?** If there were no false thoughts in

the consciousness skandha, then it would not be influenced and permeated by false habits.

J3 Indicates accurately its time of cessation.

Sutra:

"If you do not open and unite your six sense faculties so that they function interchangeably, this false thinking will never cease.

Commentary:

If you do not achieve the state where you can **open and unite your six sense faculties so that they function interchangeably –** if you have not reached that level of cultivation, **this false thinking will never cease.** Unless you attain the state in which you can use your six sense faculties interchangeably, this false thinking will not go away.

J4 Discussing its extent and concluding with the name.

Sutra:

"That's why your seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are presently strung together by subtle habits, so that within the profound clarity, existence and nonexistence are both unreal. This is the fifth kind of upside-down, minutely subtle thinking.

Commentary:

That's why your seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are presently strung together by subtle habits… The functions of your six sense faculties-seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, tactile awareness, and knowing-are strung together by subtle habits, like beads on a string. These habits are extremely subtle and hard to detect. **…so that within the** still, **profound clarity** of your nature, **existence and nonexistence are both unreal.** You may maintain that they exist, but they do not really exist. You may claim they don't exist, yet they do exist. **This** kind of intangible situation **is** the

state of **the fifth kind of upside-down, minutely subtle thinking.** This kind of false thinking is also very subtle and difficult to detect.

H3 General conclusion of what false thinking brings into being.

Sutra:

"Ananda, these five skandhas of reception develop with five kinds of false thinking.

Commentary:

Ananda, these five kinds of **skandhas of reception –** form, feeling, thinking, formations, and consciousness **– develop with five kinds of false thinking.** So these five kinds of false thinking are also produced.

G2 Answers about the depth of the realms of the skandhas.

Sutra:

"You also wanted to know the depth and scope of each realm. Form and emptiness are the boundaries of form. Contact and separation are the boundaries of feeling. Remembering and forgetting are the boundaries of thinking. Destruction and production are the boundaries of formations. Deep purity entering to unite with deep purity belongs to the boundaries of consciousness.

Commentary:

You also wanted to know the depth and scope of each realm. You wanted to know whether the realm of each skandha was shallow or deep. What are they like? Where are their boundaries? I will tell you now. **Form and emptiness are the boundaries of form.** Form and emptiness are relative to each other, and they are the boundaries of form. **Contact** with **and separation** from the objects of touch **are the boundaries of feeling. Remembering and forgetting are the boundaries of thinking. Destruction and production are the boundaries of formations. Deep purity entering to unite with deep purity belongs to the boundaries of**

consciousness. Purity unites with purity, and that forms the realm of the eighth consciousness.

G3 Answers about the suddenness or gradualness of cessation.

Sutra:

"At their source, these five skandhas arise in layers. Their arising is due to consciousness, while their cessation begins with the elimination of form.

Commentary:

At their source, these five skandhas arise in layers. The five skandhas are produced in layers. There is a mutual cycle, and they aid one another. **Their arising is due to consciousness, while their cessation begins with the elimination of form.** How does cessation happen? Once form is gone, then the skandhas will become empty. They arise from consciousness, and their cessation begins when form is eliminated.

Sutra:

"You may have a sudden awakening to the principle, at which point they all simultaneously vanish. But in terms of the specifics, they are eliminated not all at once, but in sequence.

Commentary:

You may have a sudden awakening to the principle, at which point they all simultaneously vanish. You understand the principle very clearly. Once you have awakened, the methods of cultivation you have used cease to exist, and the notion of awakening is also gone. If you understand the principle, then even the idea of awakening is gone. **But in terms of the specifics, they are eliminated not all at once, but in sequence.** On the noumenal level, you have become enlightened. But at the level of phenomena, elimination takes place in sequence. It's like taking off clothing. You have to first take off the first layer, and then the second layer, the third layer, the fourth layer, the fifth layer. In terms of specifics, you have to eliminate them in sequence. Having understood the

principle, you still have to cultivate at a practical level. Only through actual cultivation can you break through all five skandhas.

[January 1983]

Earlier one of my disciples commented that five layers of clothing is not a very apt analogy for the five skandhas, because the *Heart Sutra* says, “He illuminated the five skandhas and saw that they are all empty, and he crossed beyond all suffering and difficulty.” If they were like five layers of clothing, then when all the layers were peeled away, the person would be naked. So his comment that this would cause people to have false thoughts is true enough.

Before the five skandhas have been broken through, the person is still covered by the five layers of clothing, and people don’t have so many false thoughts. Once the skandhas are broken through and the person is naked – oh no! So the analogy is slightly problematic. No wonder you said it caused you to have false thoughts. What do you think should be done? Can you offer another explanation? The five layers of clothing are visible, while the five skandhas are invisible. The visible and the invisible are different.

The five skandhas are merely a kind of *yin* energy, and it can also become *yang* energy. *Yin* demons can become *yang* demons; it all depends on whether or not you know how to use them. If you know, then you won’t be turned by them, and the state isn’t a bad one. But if you are greedy for spiritual powers, advantages, or states, then you’ve been turned by them.

The five skandhas, also known as the five *yin*, are five kinds of *yin* energy. It’s because of the *yin* energy that you come under demonic possession. *Yang* energy makes a person a Bodhisattva. However, the important thing is not to get attached. when you have no attachments, then

You wear clothes all day,
and yet you haven’t put on a thread.

You eat all day,
and yet you haven't consumed a gain of rice.

You aren't attached to whether you are wearing clothes or not. People who truly cultivate have no attachments to such <matters. It's not necessarily a matter of taking off five layers <of clothing, because what will you do when you're not wearing anything? This is just a very simple analogy that I gave because I was worried that you might not understand.

In reality, it's just a mass of energy acting up. This energy can be proper or deviant. Deviant energy means *yin* energy, and proper energy means *yang* energy. If you don't know how to use it, then it turns into a *yin* demon. If you do know how to use it, then it becomes a *yang* demon. At this point you should neither think of good nor think of bad. Don't crave good states, and don't be afraid of bad states. When you encounter a state, just act as if it didn't exist. Don't get attached to it. I know that my disciple doesn't want to take off his five layers of clothing, because he'd feel embarrassed if he did.

Sutra:

"I have already shown you the knots tied in the Karpasa cloth. What is it that you do not understand, that causes you to ask about it again?

Commentary:

I have already shown you the knots tied in the Karpasa cloth. I tied six knots in the cloth. **What is it that you do not understand, that causes you to ask about it again?** Why is it that you still don't understand? why are you asking me about it all over again? You're belaboring the point.

F3 Concluding exhortation to transmit this teaching.

Sutra:

"You should gain a thorough understanding of the origin of this false thinking and then transmit your understanding to

cultivators in the future Dharma-ending Age. Let them recognize this falseness and naturally give rise to deep disdain for it. Let them know of Nirvana so that they will not linger in the Triple Realm.

Commentary:

Ananda, **you should** find and **gain a thorough understanding of the origin of this false thinking and then transmit your understanding to cultivators in the future Dharma-ending Age.** Enable all living beings to thoroughly understand this principle. Transmit this principle to those in the Dharma-ending Age. **Let them recognize this falseness and naturally give rise to deep disdain for it.** Cause all those cultivators to know that the falseness of false thinking comes from themselves. Let them clearly understand its source and pattern, so that they become disgusted with it. **Let them know of Nirvana.** when living beings know that they are capable of realizing Nirvana, **they will not** want to **linger in the Triple Realm.** They will not wish to remain in the burning house of the Three Realms – the Desire Realm, the Form Realm, and the Formless Realm.

"There is no peace in the Three Realms. They are like a house on fire." Great Master Lian Chi (Lotus Pond) was an eminent Dharma Master in China. After he had left the home-life, he was always thinking about going home to see his wife. He did, in fact go back again and again to see her. His wife was a very intelligent person, however, and she thought over the situation. Her husband had left home, but he wasn't cultivating. He still held on to emotional love and could not put it down. He kept coming home, and that really wasn't the way to do it. So she dug a big pit right in front of the door to her house, and covered it with a mat. Inside the pit she built a small fire. The next time Great Master Lian Chi came back home, he stepped into the trap and fell into the burning pit. "What are you doing building a pit of fire right here?" he cried.

His wife replied, "If you know it's a pit of fire, why do you keep coming back?"

Hearing that one sentence, he became enlightened and never went home again. That illustrates the saying, “There is no peace in the Three Realms. They are like a house on fire.” The Desire Realm, the Form Realm, and the Formless Realm are not pleasant or safe places. Rather, they are like a burning house.

CHAPTER 9

Exhortation to Propagate the Sutra

B3 Propagation section.
C1 Compares to blessings of offering to Buddhas.

Sutra:

"Ananda, suppose someone were to fill up all the space in the ten directions with the seven precious things and then present them as an offering to Buddhas as numerous as motes of dust, with his mind set on serving and making offerings to them in thought after thought. Do you think this person would reap many blessings from making such an offering to the Buddhas?"

Commentary:

Ananda, suppose someone were to fill up all the space in the worlds of the **ten directions with the seven precious things and then present them as an offering to Buddhas as numerous as motes of dust, with his mind set on serving and making offerings to them in thought after thought.** There would be gold, silver, Vaidurya, crystal, mother-of-pearl, red pearls, and carnelian everywhere. He would then very respectfully hold them up as an offering to limitless, boundless Buddhas. He would be bowing and

making offerings in every thought, without letting a moment go by in vain.

Do you think this person would reap many blessings from making such an offering to the Buddhas? what do you think? TMs person has given such a tremendous quantity of the seven precious things as an offering to the Buddhas. Under these circumstances, will he obtain a great reward of blessings? What do you say?

Sutra:

Ananda answered, "Since space is limitless, the precious things would be boundless. In the past, someone gave the Buddha seven coins and consequently was reborn as a Wheel-turning King in his next life. As to this person who now fills up all of space and all the Buddhalands with an offering of precious things that could not be reckoned through endless eons, how could there be a limit to his blessings?"

Commentary:

Ananda answered, "Since space is limitless, the precious things would be boundless. In the past, someone gave the Buddha seven coins and consequently was reborn as a Wheel-Turning King in his next life." A Wheel-turning Sage King has a thousand sons. It is not known how many Wives he has. A wheel-turning Sage King has awesome Virtue. He has a vehicle that can take him around the four great continents in just a couple of hours. His vehicle is probably faster than any modem-day rocket. That is one of the treasures he owns.

As to this person who now fills up all of space and all the Buddhalands with an offering of precious things that could not be reckoned through endless eons, how could there be a limit to his blessings? The person who offered seven coins to the Buddha attained the position of a wheel-turning Sage King. Now this person gives an offering not of a mere seven coins, but of a quantity of the seven precious things that fills empty space and the Dharma Realm. Even if one spent a limitless and inconceivable number of

eons, one could never finish calculating his blessings and virtue. How could you say that his blessings have a limit? They have no limit.

C3 Praising the merit of extinguishing evil.

Sutra:

The Buddha told Ananda, "All Buddhas, Tathagatas, speak words which are not false. There might be another person who had personally committed the four major offenses and the ten parajikas so that, in an instant he would have to pass through the Avichi Hells in this world and other worlds, until he had passed through all the Relentless Hells in the ten directions without exception.

Commentary:

The Buddha told Ananda, "All Buddhas, Tathagatas, speak words which are not false. The Buddhas do not tell lies. **There might be another person who had personally committed the four major offenses and the ten parajikas."** The four major offenses are killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying. In the *Shurangama Sutra*, they are known as "The Four Clear Instructions on Purity," which you heard about earlier. The ten parajikas are the ten major Bodhisattva Precepts. Parajika means cast out, for someone who commits these offenses is cast out of the sea of the Buddhadharma. These ten offenses cannot be repented 0£ if you want to understand them in detail, you can look up the first ten Bodhisattva precepts. **"…so that, in an instant, he would have to pass through the Avichi Hells in this world and other worlds, until he had passed through all the Relentless Hells** in all the worlds throughout **the ten directions –** he would have undergone suffering for his offenses in every single hell **without exception."**

Sutra:

"And yet if he could explain this Dharma-door for just the space of a thought to those in the Dharma-ending Age who have not yet studied it, his obstacles from offenses would be

eradicated in response to that thought, and all the hells where he was to undergo suffering would become lands of peace and bliss.

Commentary:

And yet if he could explain this Dharma-door of the Great Shurangama Samadhi **for just the space of a thought to those in the Dharma-ending Age who have not yet studied it, his obstacles from offenses would be eradicated in response to that thought.** If in the Dharma-ending Age, for as short a time as the space of a single thought, this person could teach the Dharma-door of the *Shurangama Sutra* to people who have not yet studied the Buddhadharma, his offenses would swiftly be eradicated. **And all the hells where he was to undergo suffering would become lands of peace and bliss.** All the suffering he was due to undergo in the various hells would become peace and happiness that he gets to enjoy. He would not experience any suffering at all.

Sutra:

"The blessings he would obtain would surpass those of the person previously mentioned by hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of times, indeed by so many times that no calculations or analogies could express it.

Commentary:

The blessings he would obtain would surpass those of the person previously mentioned. The blessings obtained by the person who explains the *Shurangama Sutra* surpass those gained by the person who fills empty space and the Dharma Realm with the seven precious things and offers them to as many Tathagatas as there are motes of dust, respectfully serving and making offerings to them. If you can explain the *Shurangama Sutra* for people who don't understand the Buddhadharma, the blessings you obtain surpass those of the other person **by hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of times, indeed by so many times that no calculations or analogies could express it.** Your reward of

blessings is so much greater that there is no way to figure out just how great it is.

C4 Brings up the supremacy of two benefits.

Sutra:

"Ananda, if living beings are able to recite this Sutra and uphold this mantra, I could not describe in endless eons how great the benefits will be. Rely on the teaching I have spoken. Cultivate in accord with it, and you will directly realize Bodhi without encountering demonic karma."

Commentary:

Ananda, if living beings in the future **are able to recite this Sutra and uphold this mantra, I could not describe in endless eons how great the benefits will be.** If I were to speak in detail about the benefits of reading and reciting the *Shurangama Sutra* and reciting the Shurangama Mantra, I still wouldn't finish no matter how many great eons had passed.

All of you should **rely on the teaching I have spoken. Cultivate in accord with it, and you will directly realize Bodhi without encountering any demonic karma.** Follow this method to cultivate, and you will straightaway be able to accomplish the Unsurpassed Fruition of Bodhi, without undergoing any further demonic karma.

[January 1983]

The *Shurangama Sutra* is a Sutra that acts like a demon-spotting mirror in Buddhism. All the celestial demons, externalists, and the *li*, *mei*, and *wang Liang* ghosts reveal their true appearance when they see the *Shurangama Sutra*. They have no way to hide and no place to which they can flee. And so in the past, when Great Master Zhi Zhe heard of the existence of this Sutra, he bowed in the direction of India for eighteen years. For eighteen years, he used this spirit of utmost sincerity to pray for this Sutra to be brought to China.

Of all the greatly virtuous and eminent monks of the past, all the wise and lofty Sanghans, there was not a single one who did not praise the *Shurangama Sutra*. Therefore, as long as the *Shurangama Sutra* exists, the Buddhadharma exists. If the *Shurangama Sutra* is destroyed, then the Buddhadharma will also become extinct. How will the decline of the Dharma come about? It will begin with the destruction of the *Shurangama Sutra*. who will destroy it? The celestial demons and externalists will. They see the *Shurangama Sutra* as being like a nail in their eyes and a thorn in their flesh. They can't sit stilt and they can't stand steady; they are compelled to invent a deviant theory that says the *Shurangama Sutra* is false.

As Buddhist disciples, we should recognize true principle. Every word of the doctrines in the *Shurangama Sutra* is the absolute truth. There isn't one word that does not express the truth. So now that we are studying the Fifty Skandha-demons, we should realize even more just how important the *Shurangama Sutra* is. The *Shurangama Sutra* is what the deviant demons, ghosts, and goblins fear most.

The Venerable Master Hsu Yun lived to be a hundred and twenty years old, and during his whole life, he didn't write a commentary for any Sutra other than the *Shurangama Sutra*. He took special care to preserve the manuscript of his commentary on the *Shurangama Sutra*. He preserved it for several decades, but it was later lost during the Yunmen incident. This was the Elder Hsu's greatest regret in his life. He proposed that, as left-home people, we should study the *Shurangama Sutra* to the point that we can recite it by memory, from the beginning to the end, and from the end to the beginning, forwards and backwards. That was his proposal. I know that, throughout his whole life, the Elder Hsu regarded the *Shurangama Sutra* as being especially important.

When someone informed the Elder Hsu that there were people who said the *Shurangama Sutra* was false, he explained that the decline of the Dharma occurs just because these people try to pass

fish eyes off as pearls, confusing people so that they cannot distinguish right from wrong. They make people blind so that they can no longer recognize the Buddhadharma. They take the true as false, and the false as true. Look at these people: This one writes a book, and people all read it. That one writes a book, and they read it too. The real Sutras spoken by the Buddha himself are put up on the shelf, where no one ever reads them. From this, we can see that living beings' karmic obstacles are very heavy. If they hear deviant knowledge and deviant views, they readily believe them. If you speak Dharma based on proper knowledge and proper views, they won't believe it. Speak it again, and they still won't believe it. Why? Because they don't have sufficient good roots and foundations. That's why they have doubts about the Proper Dharma. They are skeptical and unwilling to believe.

Here at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, we will be setting up the Shurangama Platform, so it will be ideal if some of you bring forth the resolve to read the *Shurangama Sutra* every day for one or two hours. You can study it daily just as if you were studying in school and memorize it so that you can recite it by heart. If you can recite the *Shurangama Sutra*, the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, and even the *Avatamsaka Sutra* from memory, that will be the very best. If someone is able to recite the *Shurangama Sutra*, the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, and the *Avatamsaka Sutra* from memory, then it will mean that this is still a time when the Proper Dharma exists in the world. Therefore, in such a wonderful place as the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, everyone should bring forth a great Bodhi resolve to do these things. It's not that we are competing with others. We should be outstanding, rise above the crowd, and do these things.

In the past, I had a wish: I wanted to be able to recite the *Dharma Flower Sutra* and the *Shurangama Sutra* from memory. In Hong Kong, I have a disciple who can recite the *Shurangama Sutra* from memory. I taught him to study the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, but in the end he probably didn't finish memorizing it which is very regrettable. In such a fine place as we have here, each of you should

bring forth a great resolve to study the Buddhist Sutras and precepts-the *Shurangama Sutra*, the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, the Vinaya in Four Divisions, and the Brahma Net Sutra-until you can recite them from memory. That would be the best, for then the Proper Dharma would surely remain here for a long time.

C5 Concludes with the dharma bliss experienced by the great assembly.

Sutra:

When the Buddha finished speaking this Sutra, the Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, Upasikas, and all the gods, humans, and asuras in this world, as well as all the Bodhisattvas, those of the Two Vehicles, sages, immortals, and pure youths in other directions, and the mighty ghosts and spirits of initial resolve all felt elated, made obeisance, and withdrew.

Commentary:

When the Buddha finished speaking this Sutra, all **the** great **Bhikshus;** all the **Bhikshunis; Upasakas,** a Sanskrit word that means "men who serve closely," that is, laymen who draw near to and serve the Buddha; **Upasikas,** women who serve closely; **and all the gods; humans; and asuras in this world** (By now you all know what asuras are; they have the biggest tempers and they love to fight. One of my disciples says his dog is an asura. Well, maybe he himself is an asura as well! But I believe that after you all have heard the *Shurangama Sutra*, you will become Bodhisattvas, and no longer have the temper of asuras); **as well as all the Bodhisattvas of other lands; those of the Two Vehicles,** the Hearers and Those Enlightened by Conditions; **sages; immortals; and pure youths,** who enter the Path of cultivation in their youthful innocence, **in other directions; and the mighty ghosts and spirits of initial resolve all felt elated, made obeisance, and withdrew.**

Now that we have finished hearing this Sutra, no matter what kind of beings we are, whether we are gods, humans, asuras, hell-beings, hungry ghosts, or animals, we must bring forth the Bodhi resolve. We must all practice the Bodhisattva Path. We must all be

Bodhisattvas. Do not continue to create the causes for becoming other kinds of beings. We must create the causes for becoming Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and we must realize the fruitions of Bodhisattvahood and Buddhahood. Shakyamuni Buddha made predictions for us and for all living beings long ago. It is said, "People who recite 'Namo Buddha' just once will all accomplish Buddhahood." Not to mention reciting it many times, if we simply say "Namo Buddha" once, in the future we will definitely become Buddhas, although we do not know when.

By listening to the *Shurangama Sutra*, we have come to understand a lot of Buddhadharma. There is inconceivable merit and virtue in this. That's why it was said that the merit and virtue of filling the space of the ten directions with the seven precious things and making an offering of them to the Buddhas is not as great as that of explaining the *Shurangama Sutra*. Now that we have finished explaining the *Shurangama Sutra*, your suffering has come to an end and my toil has also ended. Why? Because we don't have to work so hard. In the future when you practice the Bodhisattva Path, there may be more suffering, but you will endure it willingly; it will not be forced upon you by others. You yourself are willing to accept those troubles.

Therefore, we should make the Bodhisattva resolve and practice the Bodhisattva Path. I hope that everyone who has heard the *Shurangama Sutra* lectured will make a Bodhisattva resolve. I'll say it again: no matter whether you are a god, a human being, an asura, a hell-being, a hungry ghost, or an animal, you must all resolve to become enlightened. Don't be confused anymore. One who is enlightened is a Buddha, and one who is confused is a living being. Now we all hope to become enlightened a little sooner.

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When Buddhism first came to China from India, one of the most important tasks required for its establishment was the translation of the Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Chinese. This work involved a great many people, such as the renowned monk National Master Kumarajiva (fifth century), who led an assembly of over 800 people to work on the translation of the Tripitaka (Buddhist canon) for over a decade. Because of the work of individuals such as these, nearly the entire Buddhist Tripitaka of over a thousand texts exists to the present day in Chinese.

Now the banner of the Buddha's Teachings is being firmly planted in Western soil, and the same translation work is being done from Chinese into English. Since 1970, the Buddhist Text Translation Society (BTTS) has been making a paramount contribution toward this goal. Aware that the Buddhist Tripitaka is a work of such magnitude that its translation could never be entrusted to a single person, the BTTS, emulating the translation assemblies of ancient times, does not publish a work until it has passed through four committees for primary translation, revision, editing, and certification. The leaders of these committees are Bhikshus (monks) and Bhikshunis (nuns) who have devoted their lives to the study and practice of the Buddha's teachings. For this reason, all of the works of the BTTS put an emphasis on what the principles of the Buddha's teachings mean in terms of actual practice and not simply hypothetical conjecture.

The translations of canonical works by the Buddhist Text Translation Society are accompanied by extensive commentaries by the Venerable Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua.

BTTS Publications

Buddhist Sutras. Amitabha Sutra, Dharma Flower (Lotus) Sutra, Flower Adornment (Avatamsaka) Sutra, Heart Sutra & Verses without a Stand, Shurangama Sutra, Sixth Patriarch Sutra, Sutra in Forty-two Sections, Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva, Vajra Prajna Paramita (Diamond) Sutra.

Commentarial Literature. Buddha Root Farm, City of 10000 Buddhas Recitation Handbook, Filiality: The Human Source, Herein Lies the Treasure-trove, Listen to Yourself Think Everything Over, Shastra on the Door to Understanding the Hundred Dharmas, Song of Enlightenment, The Ten Dharma Realms Are Not beyond a Single Thought, Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma, Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma during the 1993 Trip to Taiwan, Water Mirror Reflecting Heaven.

Biographical. In Memory of the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua, Pictorial Biography of the Venerable Master Hsü Yün, Records of High Sanghans, Records of the Life of the Venerable Master Hsüan Hua, Three Steps One Bow, World Peace Gathering, News from True Cultivators, Open Your Eyes Take a Look at the World, With One Heart Bowing to the City of 10000 Buddhas.

Children's Books. Cherishing Life, Human Roots: Buddhist Stories for Young Readers.

Musics, Novels and Brochures. Songs for Awakening, Awakening, The Three Cart Patriarch, City of 10000 Buddhas Color Brochure, Celebrisi's Journey, Heng Ch'au's Journal.

The Buddhist Monthly–Vajra Bodhi Sea is a monthly journal of orthodox Buddhism which has been published by the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, formerly known as the Sino-American Buddhist Association, since 1970. Each issue contains the most recent translations of the Buddhist canon by the Buddhist Text Translation Society. Also included in each issue are a biography of a great Patriarch of Buddhism from the ancient past, sketches of the lives of contemporary monastics and lay-followers around the world, articles on practice, and other material. The journal is bilingual, Chinese and English

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The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association

Mission

The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association (formerly the Sino-American Buddhist Association) was founded by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua in the United States of America in 1959. Taking the Dharma Realm as its scope, the Association aims to disseminate the genuine teachings of the Buddha throughout the world. The Association is dedicated to translating the Buddhist canon, propagating the Orthodox Dharma, promoting ethical education, and bringing benefit and happiness to all beings. Its hope is that individuals, families, the society, the nation, and the entire world will, under the transforming influence of the Buddhadharma, gradually reach the state of ultimate truth and goodness.

The Founder

The Venerable Master, whose names were An Tse and To Lun, received the Dharma name Hsuan Hua and the transmission of Dharma from Venerable Master Hsu Yun in the lineage of the Wei Yang Sect. He was born in Manchuria, China, at the beginning of the century. At nineteen, he entered the monastic order and dwelt in a hut by his mother's grave to practice filial piety. He meditated, studied the teachings, ate only one meal a day, and slept sitting up. In 1948 he went to Hong Kong, where he established the Buddhist Lecture Hall and other Way-places. In 1962 he brought the Proper Dharma to the West, lecturing on several dozen Mahayana Sutras in the United States. Over the years, the Master established more than twenty monasteries of Proper Dharma under the auspices of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association and the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. He also founded centers for the translation of the Buddhist canon and for education to spread the influence of the Dharma in the East and West. The Master manifested the stillness in the United States in 1995. Through his lifelong, selfless dedication to teaching living beings with wisdom and compassion, he influenced countless people to change their faults and to walk upon the pure, bright path to enlightenment.

Dharma Propagation, Buddhist Text Translation, and Education

The Venerable Master Hua's three great vows after leaving the home-life were (1) to propagate the Dharma, (2) to translate the Buddhist Canon, and (3) to promote education. In order to make these vows a reality, the Venerable Master based himself on the Three Principles and the Six Guidelines. Courageously facing every hardship, he founded monasteries, schools, and centers in the West, drawing in living beings and teaching them on a vast scale. Over the years, he founded the following institutions:

The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas and Its Branches

In propagating the Proper Dharma, the Venerable Master not only trained people but also founded Way-places where the Dharma wheel could turn and living beings could be saved. He wanted to provide cultivators with pure places to practice in accord with the Buddha's regulations. Over the years, he founded many Way-places of Proper Dharma. In the United States and Canada, these include the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas; Gold Mountain Monastery; Gold Sage Monastery; Gold Wheel Monastery; Gold Summit Monastery; Gold Buddha Monastery; Avatamsaka Monastery; Long Beach Monastery; the City of the Dharma Realm; Berkeley Buddhist Monastery; Avatamsaka Hermitage; and Blessings, Prosperity, and Longevity Monastery. In Taiwan, there are the Dharma Realm Buddhist Books Distribution Association, Dharma Realm Monastery, and Amitabha Monastery. In Malaysia, there are Zi Yun Dong Monastery, Deng Bi An Monastery, and Lotus Vihara. In Hong Kong, there are the Buddhist Lecture Hall and Cixing Monastery.

Purchased in 1974, the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is the hub of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association. The City is located in Talmage, Mendocino County, California, 110 miles north of San Francisco. Eighty of the 488 acres of land are in active use. The remaining acreage consists of meadows, orchards, and woods. With over seventy large buildings containing over 2,000 rooms, blessed with serenity and fresh, clean air, it is the first large Buddhist monastic community in the United States. It is also an international center for the Proper Dharma.

Although the Venerable Master Hua was the Ninth Patriarch in the Weiyang Sect of the Chan School, the monasteries he founded emphasize all of the five main practices of Mahayana Buddhism (Chan meditation, Pure Land,

esoteric, Vinaya (moral discipline), and doctrinal studies). This accords with the Buddha's words: "The Dharma is level and equal, with no high or low." At the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, the rules of purity are rigorously observed. Residents of the City strive to regulate their own conduct and to cultivate with vigor. Taking refuge in the Proper Dharma, they lead pure and selfless lives, and attain peace in body and mind. The Sutras are expounded and the Dharma wheel is turned daily. Residents dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to making Buddhism flourish. Monks and nuns in all the monasteries take one meal a day, always wear their precept sash, and follow the Three Principles:

Freezing, we do not scheme.
Starving, we do not beg.
Dying of poverty, we ask for nothing.
According with conditions, we do not change.
Not changing, we accord with conditions.
We adhere firmly to our three great principles.
We renounce our lives to do the Buddha's work.
We take the responsibility to mold our own destinies.
We rectify our lives to fulfill the Sanghan's role.
Encountering specific matters,
we understand the principles.
Understanding the principles,
we apply them in specific matters.
We carry on the single pulse of
the Patriarchs' mind-transmission.

The monasteries also follow the Six Guidelines: not contending, not being greedy, not seeking, not being selfish, not pursuing personal advantage, and not lying.

International Translation Institute

The Venerable Master vowed to translate the Buddhist Canon (Tripitaka) into Western languages so that it would be widely accessible throughout the world. In 1973, he founded the International Translation Institute on Washington Street in San Francisco for the purpose of translating Buddhist scriptures into English and other languages. In 1977, the Institute was merged into Dharma Realm Buddhist University as the Institute for the Translation of Buddhist Texts. In 1991, the Venerable Master purchased a large building in

Burlingame (south of San Francisco) and established the International Translation Institute there for the purpose of translating and publishing Buddhist texts. To date, in addition to publishing over one hundred volumes of Buddhist texts in Chinese, the Association has published more than one hundred volumes of English, French, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Japanese translations of Buddhist texts, as well as bilingual (Chinese and English) editions. Audio and video tapes also continue to be produced. The monthly journal Vajra Bodhi Sea, which has been in circulation for nearly thirty years, has been published in bilingual (Chinese and English) format in recent years.

In the past, the difficult and vast mission of translating the Buddhist canon in China was sponsored and supported by the emperors and kings themselves. In our time, the Venerable Master encouraged his disciples to cooperatively shoulder this heavy responsibility, producing books and audio tapes and using the medium of language to turn the wheel of Proper Dharma and do the great work of the Buddha. All those who aspire to devote themselves to this work of sages should uphold the Eight Guidelines of the International Translation Institute:

1. One must free oneself from the motives of personal fame and profit.
2. One must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.
3. One must refrain from aggrandizing one's work and denigrating that of others.
4. One must not establish oneself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with one's fault-finding.
5. One must take the Buddha-mind as one's own mind.
6. One must use the wisdom of Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles.
7. One must request Virtuous Elders of the ten directions to certify one's translations.
8. One must endeavor to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

These are the Venerable Master's vows, and participants in the work of translation should strive to realize them.

Instilling Goodness Elementary School, Developing Virtue Secondary School, Dharma Realm Buddhist University

"Education is the best national defense." The Venerable Master Hua saw clearly that in order to save the world, it is essential to promote good education. If we want to save the world, we have to bring about a complete change in people's minds and guide them to cast out unwholesomeness and to pursue goodness. To this end the Master founded Instilling Goodness Elementary School in 1974, and Developing Virtue Secondary School and Dharma Realm Buddhist University in 1976.

In an education embodying the spirit of Buddhism, the elementary school teaches students to be filial to parents, the secondary school teaches students to be good citizens, and the university teaches such virtues as humaneness and righteousness. Instilling Goodness Elementary School and Developing Virtue Secondary School combine the best of contemporary and traditional methods and of Western and Eastern cultures. They emphasize moral virtue and spiritual development, and aim to guide students to become good and capable citizens who will benefit humankind. The schools offer a bilingual (Chinese/English) program where boys and girls study separately. In addition to standard academic courses, the curriculum includes ethics, meditation, Buddhist studies, and so on, giving students a foundation in virtue and guiding them to understand themselves and explore the truths of the universe. Branches of the schools (Sunday schools) have been established at branch monasteries with the aim of propagating filial piety and ethical education.

Dharma Realm Buddhist University, whose curriculum focuses on the Proper Dharma, does not merely transmit academic knowledge. It emphasizes a foundation in virtue, which expands into the study of how to help all living beings discover their inherent nature. Thus, Dharma Realm Buddhist University advocates a spirit of shared inquiry and free exchange of ideas, encouraging students to study various canonical texts and use different experiences and learning styles to tap their inherent wisdom and fathom the meanings of those texts. Students are encouraged to practice the principles they have understood and apply the Buddhadharma in their lives, thereby nurturing their wisdom and virtue. The University aims to produce outstanding individuals of high moral character who will be able to bring benefit to all sentient beings.

Sangha and Laity Training Programs

In the Dharma-ending Age, in both Eastern and Western societies there are very few monasteries that actually practice the Buddha's regulations and strictly uphold the precepts. Teachers with genuine wisdom and understanding, capable of guiding those who aspire to pursue careers in Buddhism, are very rare. The Venerable Master founded the Sangha and Laity Training Programs in 1982 with the goals of raising the caliber of the Sangha, perpetuating the Proper Dharma, providing professional training for Buddhists around the world on both practical and theoretical levels, and transmitting the wisdom of the Buddha.

The Sangha Training Program gives monastics a solid foundation in Buddhist studies and practice, training them in the practical affairs of Buddhism and Sangha management. After graduation, students will be able to assume various responsibilities related to Buddhism in monasteries, institutions, and other settings. The program emphasizes a thorough knowledge of Buddhism, under-standing of the scriptures, earnest cultivation, strict observance of precepts, and the development of a virtuous character, so that students will be able to propagate the Proper Dharma and perpetuate the Buddha's wisdom. The Laity Training Program offers courses to help laypeople develop correct views, study and practice the teachings, and understand monastic regulations and ceremonies, so that they will be able to contribute their abilities in Buddhist organizations.

Let Us Go Forward Together

In this Dharma-ending Age when the world is becoming increasingly dangerous and evil, the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, in consonance with its guiding principles, opens the doors of its monasteries and centers to those of all religions and nationalities. Anyone who is devoted to humaneness, righteousness, virtue, and the pursuit of truth, and who wishes to understand him or herself and help humankind, is welcome to come study and practice with us. May we together bring benefit and happiness to all living beings.

Dharma Realm Buddhist Association Branches

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Verse of Transference

May the merit and virtue accrued from this work,
Adorn the Buddha's Pure Lands,
Repaying four kinds of kindness above,
And aiding those suffering in the paths below.

May those who see and hear of this,
All bring forth the resolve for Bodhi,
And when this retribution body is over,
Be born together in ultimate bliss.

Dharma Protector Wei T’o Bodhisattva